



Scott

It's Not The Years, It's The Mileage

*How to Make a Name for Yourself When Everybody Else Is
Older, Smarter and More Experienced Than You*

By Scott Ginsberg

It's hard being the youngest person in the room.

Especially when we have a message that needs to get through.

But while we can learn the techniques, memorize the tactics and practice the language, if we truly want to connect with people older than us, here's what we need to remember:

It's not the years – it's the mileage.

If we want people to listen to us, we have to show them our odometer.

Or, better yet, take them a test drive.

Otherwise our message doesn't stand a chance.

This book is a forty-day devotional that shows you how to do so.

1. **Being young is no excuse for not delivering value.** For the longest time, I made the mistake of viewing my youth as a handicap. I assumed nobody would listen, or if they did, nobody would take me seriously. And as a result of that attitude, they didn't. By making it an issue, I gave them permission to make it an issue. But as it turns out, being young is a tremendous advantage. We bring enthusiasm to kindle the energy of those around us. We bring perspective to broaden the thinking of those around us. We bring courage to inspire the confidence of those around us. We bring digital nativity to democratize the technology of those around us. We bring social networks to expand the connections between those around us. And we bring creativity to spark the playfulness of those around us. What we lack in certainty we make up in curiosity, by asking the most disturbing questions around. What we lack in velocity we make up in flexibility, by being the most patient one around. What we lack in knowledge we make up in savvyness, by being the most digitally proficient one around. And what we lack in history we make up in courage, by taking the most risks around. This simple shift in posture is the smartest, easier and cheapest way to show the world you're here to contribute, age notwithstanding. Just because you're young, doesn't mean you're useless. Focus on that, and people will stop asking how old you are.

2. **Confucius was confused.** He said if we choose a job we love, we'll never work a day in our life. In my experience, it's the exact opposite. *Choose a job you love, and you will work every day of your life.* Not necessarily *all* day, but definitely everyday. Holidays, nights, weekends, vacations, it doesn't matter. When the work you do is the work you were born to do, it's a marriage. It's an expression of how you belong to the world. And because that relationship is bigger than any job description, the work you do constantly asks for recommitment. I've been in business for ten years, and I still write every day. Even when I'm angry and depressed. Especially when I'm angry and depressed. That's usually when the bloodiest stuff shows up. Every day. Never break the chain, as Austin Kleon would say. But I don't do it out of an obsessive need to prove myself. I don't do it to wear my workaholism like a badge. I don't do it to outwork the competition. And I don't do it because I have nothing else going on in my life. I do it because it's my divine assignment. I do it because it gives my life meaning. I do it because it's my daily gift to the world. I do to express my whole capacity for living. I do it to give my river a voice. I do it so I don't die with my music in me. I do it to pay homage to the voices that shaped me. I do it because it makes life worth living. I do it because I can't not write like a rock can't not fall off a cliff. I do it to make myself necessary to the world. I do it because this is what life means to me. Most of all, though, I do it because I'm ugly when I don't. I chose a job I loved, and I'll be damned if I'm not going to work every day.

- 3. Convert your personality disorder into a career.** Consider my resume: *“Obsessive compulsive anal retentive control freak attention whore who overthinks everything and has zero patience, no social filter, limited work experience and no organizational skills who can’t follow simple directions, can’t share, doesn’t work well with others and has serious identity issues.”* Get that man a corner office. But that’s what happens when you hire yourself. You have no choice but to leverage your limitations. You play the ball where it lies and make the most of what you’ve got. Otherwise you go out of business. This approach has served me well. By creatively channeling my liabilities, by making good use of everything that I am, I’ve made money, made a difference and made a name for myself, while having a lot of fun in the process. Everything I got made fun of for, I now get paid for. I wonder what the world would look like if more people embraced the entirety of their personalities, not just their strengths. Perhaps our obsessions could become societally useful.

4. **Coveting other people's careers.** It's hard to avoid this when we see people doing things we'd like to be doing. But the reality is, we can't have another person's career any more that we can have another person's hair. Their history, their trajectory and their motivations are theirs and theirs alone. Even if we did try to copy their path and plug our variables into their equations, we'd still come out with a different result. Like taking Pemberton's recipe for Coke and mixing it ourselves, we'd always produce our own unique flavor of soda. Every time. But that's the beauty of the modern career: It's the river we can't step in twice. With global shifts in economics, technology, culture and population, there are as many career paths as there are people to take them. No two are exactly alike. And if we want to support each other in our mutual endeavors, we need to greet each other's careers with affirmation, not envy. We need to treat each other's careers as a source of inspiration, not frustration. That way, instead of bastardizing our life into a cover song of another person's music, we craft our careers into the limited editions that they were meant to be.

5. **Diagnose with dishonesty.** Six years ago, my left lung collapsed. When I woke up in the recovery room with tube in my chest, the first thing I did was ask the surgeon why this had happened to me. He said it was spontaneous. Spontaneous. Really. That's your diagnosis? That's the best you can do? Surely there must a more biological reason behind this physically traumatic episode. Not really. It just happens, he said. Excuse me, but nothing just happens. Especially not the sudden failure of my primary respiratory function. So instead of accepting what the doctor said, I spent the next week in the hospital making a diagnosis of my own. My lung collapsed because I got too successful, too fast, too early. My lung collapsed because I didn't have a healthy relationship with my breath. My lung collapsed because I allowed my career to take priority over my health. My lung collapsed because I didn't possess the physical, emotional and mental constitution to manage my own chaotic life. I told myself a lie because I knew the truth wouldn't be enough for me to change. Sometimes dishonesty is the best diagnosis.

6. **Dreaming is the easy part.** The human imagination has no trouble with that. *What kills us is when we demand excessive permission to make our dreams a reality.* Because we wouldn't dare follow our heart's desire until we were ready, until the time was right, until we had enough money, until all the planets were aligned and until the risk of failure was minimized. No, that would just be plain stupid. So we wait. And wait. And wait. And eventually, our dreams shrivel into dead memories. And we convince ourselves that we never really wanted them in the first place, so we don't feel as bad. But maybe we meet somebody who isn't addicted to permission. Somebody possessed by a relentless inner voice. Somebody whose dreams are actually coming true, right now, before their eyes, in real time, because of the daily actions they choose to take. And in that moment, we have a choice. We can sigh, smile, pat them on the back, say good-for-you and sheepishly mutter how we wish we could follow our dreams too. Or. We can channel their fire to elevate our hope, leverage their energy to disrupt our inertia and open ourselves to the invitation to take the plunge.

7. **Dreams weren't meant to be sat on.** *They're not eggs and we're not chickens.* When it comes to the birth of what's in our hearts, time doesn't always enable incubation. Sometimes it hinders execution. Sometimes patience isn't a virtue. And sometimes what we think is strategic planning is just procrastination in disguise. If that's the case, we owe it to ourselves, to our hearts, to take decisive action. To do whatever the dream needs to evolve out of dream form and into reality form. To find people who can help us become who we need to be to handle that reality. And while not every dream comes to fruition immediately, while it may take months or even years for certain dreams to prove their execution worth, we always need to be ready to crack it open. Even if we're not ready.

8. **Every time we get lost, we make our world bigger.** Our most valuable teachings come when our plans are disturbed. Our greatest transformations occur in the moments when we've lost our way. And our finest symphonies assemble when we turn a humble ear to the most unintentional music. But when we make gods out of our plans, when we scrub our world clean of surprise, and when we preserve our sense of control by itinerizing every goddamn minute of our lives, those unexpected turns never seem to take initiative toward us. And we shut the door on an entire orbit of opportunity that could change us forever. The chorus of voices tells us that if we don't know where we're going, we may never get there, or that any road will take us there. To which I respectfully say, bullshit. If we don't know where we're going, there's no destination to scare us. If we don't know where we're going, our mapless journey turns blind alleys into broad avenues. If we don't know where we're going, nobody can stop us. Not even us. I can't imagine living in a world where we can't get lost.

9. **Everybody wants the scar, but nobody wants the scab.** We're too impatient to wait, too accustomed to instant gratification and too seduced by our something-for-nothing culture. That's why we seek shortcuts to boost our numbers, trick people into buying from us and, eventually, get what we want without actually putting in our time. Because we can. Why bleed for what we want when we can buy what we don't need? I'll tell you why. *Unless it costs us something, it's not worth anything.* In any endeavor, there is no hope for easy conquest. It has to be something we work for. Something that burns a few calories and puts a few hairs on our chest. Only on the sacrificial field, only through the harsh and revealing light of adversity, do we truly do our most meaningful work. We have to be willing to bleed for it.

10. **Fill the gone gaps.** Thanks to corporate bloating, professional humanity is gone. And since nobody expects soulful individual attention, sometimes all we have to do is personally respond people. Thanks to digital platforms, pure communication is gone. And since nobody expects approachability, sometimes all we have to do is show up in person. Thanks to legalities, common sense is gone. And since nobody expects radical honesty, sometimes all we have to do is be candid with people. Thanks to belief, rational thinking is gone. And since nobody expects critical thinking, sometimes all we have to do is pose questions to people. Thanks to search engines, wondering is gone. And since nobody expects answers, sometimes all we have to do is be vessels of knowledge for people. That's how we convert rare into remarkable. By figuring out the behaviors, acts, interactions and moments that are things of the past, and then position ourselves as the only ones who actually deliver that. People will notice. *What do you do that nobody else does?*

11. **Freedom means finding a home for all of our talents.** Not hiding our light under a bushel, not asking for permission to shine, not waiting to be picked, not waiting to be paid, and not hesitating to take our talents on the ride they deserve. Instead, allowing our entire portfolio of talents – tiny, titanic and in between – to have a more prominent place in our lives, regardless if the world approves. Nobody epitomizes this more than Keller Williams. At any of his hundred concerts each year, audiences drool as he plays an average of twenty instruments per show, they marvel as he takes live digital looping to new levels and they cheer as he sings hilarious lyrics to improvised songs. His life, his career and his fans prove that talent isn't just a gift, it's an asset. Our job, not just as artists but as humans, is to invest it as aggressively, creatively and prolifically as possible, and never to feel guilty about having it or ashamed about expressing it. Whitman said we contain multitudes. It would be ashamed to watch it go to waste.

12. **Hoarding knowledge is a seductive tendency.** It makes us harder to replace, enables greater leverage, increases promotability and gives us a competitive advantage. *Plus chicks dig it.* But a lot of the time, in those moments when we operate from a scarcity mentality, we act selfish with our knowledge. We avoid telling people what we know for fear of losing power. And then everybody loses. Like pushing a rock up hill with one eye over our shoulder, it's not especially productive, it doesn't contribute to the greater good and it rarely proves to be a worthwhile investment of time and effort. But thanks to the connective beauty of the web – via blogs, social media, discussion boards, forums and other digital platforms – we've found a way to reverse the trajectory. With the click of button, we send the snowball down the hill, hoping it will grow a little bit more with each revolution, growing a little bit stronger with each person's individual contribution. Knowledge might be power, but sharing that knowledge with others priceless.

13. **How do we balance it all?** It's not just *productivity*, creating environments free from distraction that open up our capacity to start and finish what matters. It's not just *structure*, building regiment and blank time into our schedule that allow us to alternate between focus and freestyle. It's not just *energy*, expanding our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bandwidth so we can support the exertion life requires. It's not just *permission*, refusing to addict ourselves to preparation, planning, perfection, proficiency and permission. It's not just *identity*, knowing who we are, what we do and why we matter, so decisions are easier and quicker. It's not just *commitment*, jumping in with both feet and playing for keeps so discipline becomes a non-issue. It's not just *persistence*, relentlessly ignoring voices that don't matter and feedback that isn't helpful to our journey. It's not just *diversification*, allocating our creative attention to a broad range of symbiotic endeavors. The big win is when we stop with the boxes. When we realize that living a logically divided, perfectly compartmentalized existence isn't sustainable or realistic. That way, everything is everything, all the time, everywhere. And then there's nothing *to* balance.

14. **Humans love to say they'll never do things.** Until one day, before we know it, we're doing it. The arbitrary boundary we set for ourselves fades away like a fart in the wind. And our grand intentions of abstinence turn out to be grand delusions of obstinacy. Moments like these aren't just important -- they're inevitable. They teach us that life is a subjective experience. They show us that absolutes are hard to come by. And they remind us that, despite our best efforts to stand by our convictions and stay consistent with what we thought was true, life can prove us wrong at the drop of a hat. A hat we never thought we'd wear. A hat we used to think looked ridiculous on us. A hat we spend our whole life running from and speaking out against. But now that we've tried it on, we realize that the hat isn't really that bad. In fact, it's kind of flattering. Who knew? Definitely not us.

15. **Identity is a complex adventure.** On one hand, when you build your identity from the outside in, from how people respond to you, the vision you have of yourself comes solely from the social mirror. You let the world tell you who you are. And it's hard to grow into yourself when you're smothered by expectations. On the other hand, when you build your identity from the inside out, from how you chose to see yourself, the vision you have comes solely from your own limited worldview. You lack the necessary perspective. And it's hard to grow into yourself when you're insulated from any kind of feedback. The secret is balance. Listening from the outside in, listening from the inside in, then deciding for yourself. Because while both sides of the are valuable, ultimately, identity is still an inside job.

16. **It takes courage to follow our convictions.** But it takes character to reevaluate them. The problem is, our brains have this motivational drive to reduce inconsistency whenever possible. When given the choice between flexibility and certainty, between looking stupid and looking right, our egos will always choose the latter. We'd rather stick to our guns, even if we shoot ourselves in the foot. We'd rather stand our ground, even if we step on other people's toes. Because none of us wants to admit that what we bled for, what we believed in and what we held so dear for so long, was completely wrong. So we follow our convictions. We stay together with a lover who manipulates us, trapped at the end of a dead romance. We stay employed by a company that abuses us, indentured to a dysfunctional system. We stay obsessed with an idea that destroys us, deluded by an outdated dream. *And then we congratulate ourselves for being courageous.* But that's not courage – that's just consistency. In those moments when the truth isn't what we need it to be, we owe it to ourselves – and to the people we love – to follow a different path. Even if we look wrong along the way. Better to be honest with ourselves than right about ourselves.

17. It's painful being patient with a dream. Even if we do cast a vision, enlist support from every angle, hustle while we wait and take small, daily steps to move the pile forward, the dream still feels miles away. And in the process, our expectations get crushed. *It takes longer than we like.* Because nobody tells us that when we answer the call to adventure, we might be placed on hold for a year. *It feels harder than we predicted.* Because nobody tells us that arriving to a new world is just as demanding as thriving in it. *It aches more than we thought.* Because nobody tells us that when we decide to play a bigger game, chest pains and anxiety attacks come with the package. *It changes more than we imagined.* Because nobody tells us that when we take the plunge, we have to leave parts of our former selves behind to stay afloat. Turns out, waiting in line to get tickets for the game is just as important as the game itself. But the upside is, all the prework to the dream, all the battles and pains and tears and doubts, are essential in building our resilience for when the dream finally comes true. Because by that time, we'll be so beaten up that resistance will back down. It will know we mean business, and it will get the hell out of our way. And the dream will have no other choice but to come true.

18. **Mediocrity rises to the top.** I watch marginally talented people get fame they didn't deserve, land gigs they didn't earn, make money they didn't work for and achieve success they didn't sweat for. Meanwhile, I'm hustling my ass off, doing legitimately great work, work that actually improves humanity's future, and the marketplace yawns at my efforts while greatness passes the world by like a fart in the wind. Why, why, why does this happen? One, because mediocrity is *safe*. It preserves the status quo. And it prevents people from taking risks that scare them. Two, because mediocrity is *relatable*. It's something people see their reflection in. And it makes it easier to justify their subpar performance. Three, because mediocrity is a *boost*. It's something to elevate the ego. And it makes people feel better about themselves instead of confronting their own inadequacies. Can we blame the top for loving it? Lately, I've been trying to respond to mediocrity with maturity. Instead of lowering myself to playing a smaller game, I work harder. Instead of settling for the cash grab, I keep purpose at the forefront. Instead of resenting my own excellence, I take pride in getting better. Instead of allowing frustration to derail productivity and focus, I use mediocrity as a glowing source of inspiration. And instead of getting angry every time I see someone on television who wouldn't know love if it sat on their face, I fuel that frustration into my work and keep creating. My hope is, trusting that process will pay off. Eventually. Although the twelve year old inside of me secretly wants to scream.

19. **Motivated by multiple passions.** We're not supposed to be one thing in life. Part of being human is identity diversification. Making use of everything we are. Never closing the door of opportunity on ourselves, lest we become diminished to one thing, trapping our talent in a box. Why not expand our role repertoire? Why not make a mark in several spheres? Why not accrue as many hyphens as possible? There's nothing wrong with being motivated by multiple passions. In fact, it might even be a healthier approach. It provides us with a stronger anchor. It keeps us connected to the world. And it gives us permission to experience our entire spectrum of human ability. Sure beats apologizing to the world for having so many interests.

20. **Not everybody reflects.** Thanks to our backwards school system, most of us were never taught us how to reflect. Only to sit in straight rows, follow the rules, solve the next problem, memorize meaningless facts, take the test, accept our grade and move on to the next assignment. *God forbid we stop for a moment to look back on life.* No, that would require independent critical thinking. That might even lead to questioning authority. And you can't control people who do that. You can't grow them into obedient, productive cogs for the corporate assembly line if they're too busy contemplating how baldy they're being screwed by the system. For this very reason, we owe it to ourselves to introduce rituals of reflection into our lives. Even if it's only five minutes a day, we always benefit from looking back. It's not a form of narcissism – it's an act of introspection. It's not about living in the past – it's about confronting our history. Only then, when we know where we've been, can we decide where we need to go. Only then, when we know who we've become, can we decide where we need to grow. And yet, many of us still won't do it. Not just because we think it's an unproductive use of our time, but also because we're afraid of what we might see, what we might realize we were dead wrong about. *But that's the beauty of reflection.* That which stares back at us is that which we most need to see.

21. **Our currency is commonality.** The more divided our world gets, the more important sharing becomes. On the positive side, the more evidence of sharing we have, the richer we become. The more collective touchpoints that unite us, the happier we become. The more connections we have with likeminded souls, the more normal we feel. And the more time we spend together, the more optimistic we become. On the negative side, the less time together we spend, the more selfish we become. The less people we have to share our lives with, the emptier our victories become. The less social capital we build, the less support we have when the hard times hit. And the less we share our unique experience with each other, the blinder we become. *Isn't it amazing what commonality changes?*

22. **Our hands don't like being sat on.** If we want to make use of everything we are, if we want to live a life worth writing about, we have to engage our yes. We have to overextend our creative muscles, push through the fear and take on more work than we can handle. *Otherwise we're just spectators.* Sure, we're exhausted. Maybe a bit frazzled. But the momentum keeps the work flowing. The fear of failure keeps the fire burning. And the prospect of being bored keeps the plates spinning. As long as we know how to rest, relax, recover and replenish, we will make it out alive without hurting ourselves – or the ones we love. As artists, as humans, we weren't just meant to do great things. *We were meant to do a lot of things.* When in doubt, we need to raise our hands. Because being drained is better than being idle.

23. **Permission is the problem.** We have all the ideas we can handle. We have all the support we can get. We have all the tools we can use. That's not the problem. What we lack is the initiative. The capacity to execute. The willingness to stand naked before the world and give it our best shot, even if we fall flat on our face. What we lack is the will to make the decision, right now, that we are going stop sitting on our hands and go, go, go. That's the currency. That's the scarcest resource we have. In a world where we have everything we need to begin, the only thing left, the only thing we're waiting for, is permission. What's hard is, nobody is going to give it to us. They can't. Only we can give it to ourselves. But what's neat is, nobody is going to stop us either. So in that moment when we decide to act without restriction, to listen to our deepest desires and plunge into the burning heart of uncertainty, it's surprising how few people stand in our way. Forget about the idea – it's all about the "I did."

24. **Resentment for people's success.** Every time I read an article about someone in my field doing something amazing, my heart always ends up in conflict with itself. The fundamentally affirmative part of me encourages people's success to inspire my own productivity: Good for you. Right on, man. I am genuinely delighted for your success, thrilled by your accomplishments and fueled by your energy. In fact, I'm going to use your life as a glowing source of inspiration for my own. Because if you can do it, I can do it too. This is awesome. Where's my notebook? Meanwhile, the resentful part of me downgrades people's accomplishments to justify their level of success: You son of a bitch. You're not as talented as I am. You don't work as hard as I do. You haven't been around as long as I have. You don't deserve it as much as I do. You can't do it as well as I can. You don't even want it as badly as I do. What about me? When is it going to be my time? This is bullshit. Where's my gun?" Ah, the joys of being human.

25. **Play with bar raisers.** People who kindle our enthusiasm. People who transform our perspective. People who challenge our understanding. Otherwise, we stay where are. Take conferences, for example. When you show up, you never to be the most successful person in the room. Or the smartest. Or the richest. *Where's the fun in that?* Life's too short to be threatened by the greatness of others. Personally, I want to be put to shame. I want to surround myself with people who are so good, that I can't escape their orbit of inspiration. The question is whether we possess the emotional hospitality to set aside our petty competitiveness, applaud the gifts of others and openly receive their greatness without feeling threatened. Because despite our ego's best effort to protect itself by keeping the company of inferior people, it always pays to walk with the wise.

26. **Respect and welcome the pile.** Our species spends a lot of money trying to buy happiness. And a lot of the time, it works. At least for a little while. The challenge is, if nothing is ever wrong – something is probably wrong. Suffering is underrated. It's a healthy, human reality. It's an essential part of the life experience. And if we're trying to scrub our world clean of it, we'll never grow. We'll never reach our full potential. That's why sometimes, what we really need is a good low. What we need is for life to hand us a pile of shit. Some situation, some feeling or some experience that calls upon our resiliency. Something that tests us. Something that reminds us that we're alive and real and human and imperfect – and that with a little help from our friends – we'll pull through with flying colors. Are we vulnerable enough to open ourselves to the low? Are we thankful enough to give thanks when it comes? Are we buoyant enough to bounce back when it goes? Hope so. Because it's certainly a lot cheaper than buying another pair of shoes.

27. **Sadness is an inherent part of the human condition.** It's not depression, it's not devastation, it's not a chemical imbalance, it's not a sign of weakness, it's not the end of the world and it's not going to last forever. It's just part of life. My approach has always been to have a positive foundation in place for when the sadness hits. To maintain a diverse portfolio of happiness, as it were, that builds emotional stability in any situation, helps manage risks I can't control and weathers droughts through the many seasons of life. First, with the asset of attitude. I assume a baseline posture of abundance. That way, bad situations aren't as threatening. No one thing or one person can knock me off course. And if one area of life is lacking, that doesn't mean my entire life is lacking. Second, with the asset of awareness. I stay mindful of the entire horizon. That way, I never lose perspective on how unbelievably fortunate I am. Because relatively speaking, none of my problems are that dire. Most of the world would kill to for my context. Third, with the asset of action. I hustle while I wait. That way, I juggle multiple threads of work simultaneously. Instead of standing by to be picked, I invest meaning in a wide range of creative projects. And I keep moving. Fourth, with the asset of affiliation. I surround myself with like-minded, like-hearted and like-spirited people. They serve as mirrors to remind me how beautiful I am. And they remind me that roller coasters aren't so bad if you have people to scream with. That's a snapshot of my diverse portfolio of happiness. And thus far, the dividends have been worth it.

28. **Stand out in the culture of gone.** Thanks to online anonymity, civility is gone. And since nobody expects manners, sometimes all we have to do is act polite and courteous with people. Thanks to reality television, talent is gone. And since nobody expects ability, sometimes all we have to do is be really good for people. Thanks to social tagging, privacy is gone. And since nobody expects discretion, sometimes all we have to do is keep our mouths shut for people. Thanks to infinite choice, commitment is gone. And since nobody expects persistence, sometimes all we have to do is finish what we started with people. Thanks to entitlement, work ethic is gone. And since nobody expects effort, sometimes all we have to do is work our asses off for people. Thanks to velocity, mindfulness is gone. And since nobody expects focus, sometimes all we have to do is be present for people. That's how we convert rare into remarkable. By figuring out the behaviors, acts, interactions and moments that are things of the past, and then position ourselves as the only ones who actually deliver that. People will notice. *What do you do that nobody else does?*

29. **Success breeds success – and expectation.** *“I’ve seen your trick, what’s next?”* That’s what our audiences demand. That’s what keeps them coming back for more. Which, from the standpoint of productivity, is great. People’s craving for novelty is a helpful probe to keep us relevant and keep us on top of our creative game. It reminds us that we should always throw a few new songs into the set in between the classics. On the other hand, there’s downside to success. One we can’t afford to ignore. *With an excess of expectation, the increased pressure to deliver can destroy us.* Take professional athletes. These guys, supposed role models, willingly juice up when their professional association’s drug policy specifically prohibits the use of anabolic steroids. As a result, their reputations are ruined, their credibility is destroyed and their records are redacted or stricken with an asterisk. Strike three. But we have to look at it from their perspective. These guys are legends. Celebrities. Cultural icons that we’ve given all the adulation, adoration, attention and applause they can handle. They don’t cheat because they’re horrible people – they cheat because they’re successful people. And when you’re successful, when you have a huge audience who willingly spends their hard earned money to watch you perform, they own you. And with that relationship comes an expectation. The fans didn’t put the needle in the player’s arms. *They just made it a lot harder to say no.* Whether we’re ballplayers, entrepreneurs or artists, expectation is a balancing act. On one hand, we don’t want to become a victim of our own success. On the other, we don’t want to stop taking the creative risks that made us successful in the first place.

30. **Success doesn't have a line.** No matter how good we are, how long we wait, or how hard we hustle while we wait, everyone's career operates on a different clock. Much to our frustration, there's no democracy, no rational system of advancement and no standard set of rules that determines when it's our time to shine. The people who blow up aren't necessarily better or more deserving than us. It's just that they were right person, in the right place, at the right time, with the right product, in front of the right audience, with the right leverage. Hootie and the Blowfish was a group of unassuming, unpretentious everymen. But they delivered emotionally charged, likeable, comforting pop songs in a music scene that was dominated by cynical, anguished alternative rock anthems. And as a result, their debut record became the fifteenth best selling album in history. Timing isn't everything, it's the only thing. And we can bang our heads against the wall, resenting other people's success, wondering why them and not us, all day long. But a smarter investment of our time would be to get over it, get back to work, get ourselves out there and get ready to hop on the board when our wave comes. Because it might be a long time before what we do catches on. *Will you still be around when the world is ready for you?*

31. **The color of your actions.** In a world dominated by scarcity, those willing to give themselves away, win. Those willing to open up their hearts, open up their schedules, and in some cases, open up their entire kingdoms, will no doubt feel the reverberations for years to come. My friend Jeffrey might be most generous person I know. Nine years ago, after watching the first interview I'd ever done, he sent me an email of the blue. He said congrats and offered himself as a friend, resource and mentor, anytime, anywhere, forever. I thought he was just being nice. But nearly a decade later, that relationship still lives on. He's been a gargantuan influence in my life, and I plan to live my life as a thank you in perpetuity. Turns out, Jeffrey's email wasn't out of the blue – it was out of the green. The color of generosity. The color of abundance. The color of nurturing. The color of growth. I wonder what the world would look like if more people did things out of the green, not just out of the blue.

32. **The decision to play a bigger game changes us.** *First, it modifies what matters.* We let go of what kept us small. We surrender what kept us comfortable. We walk away from what we assumed was important. And we blow up what would otherwise box us in. *Next, it shifts our posture.* We start to operate from a possibilitarian mentality. We engage the muscle of yes. We give ourselves permission to pursue broader venues. And we widen the horizon of what's attainable. *Then, it opens new artistic vistas.* We start to live larger than our labels. We aren't afraid to have an imagination. We get in touch with the purest part of our creative selves. And we expand our role repertoire. *Later, it invites support.* We somehow gain the resources we need. We notice opportunities previously overlooked. We align with new people who are playing a similar game. And we attract an outpouring of affirmation from all angles. And all we did was decide.

33. **The problem with authenticity.** Sadly, nobody really wants you to be yourself. They say they do. But deep down, they know that being yourself means you know who you are. And people who know who they are can't be controlled. What people really want is a version of you that's safe and convenient. Someone who's part of their system. Someone who doesn't threaten their sense of self or disrupt the status quo. Someone who doesn't make them envious of your path or disenfranchised by your success. Next time people encourage you to "just be yourself," call their bluff. Do you and see what happens.

34. **The weight of our delusions.** When times are tough, it's a lot harder to believe our own bullshit. Anyone can self-rationalize when there's money in the bank, clients in the pipeline and projects in the works. That's like riding a bicycle downhill and assuming our legs are strong. But when the phone stops ringing, when the obligations start accumulating, and when we're not sure where the next check is coming from, there's only so much manure we can shovel. Eventually, we have to get radically honest with ourselves about what's working and what's not. And we have to wake up to what's true about ourselves at the risk of seeing something we couldn't see back when business was good. Otherwise, under the weight of our own delusions, even if we've managed to convince the rest of the world that everything is going fine, we'll know the reality. We'll still have to look at ourselves in the mirror every morning. And it might not be a pretty sight.

35. **The worship of incompleteness.** Turn on the television for five minutes, and you'll observe the barrage of celebrity divorces, canceled programming, corporate failures, broken systems, massive layoffs, abandoned projects, public resignations and product recalls. Why? Because our society worships incompleteness. First, because we're not finishers. *That's too much pressure.* Second, because we're terrified of our potential. *That's too much power.* Third, because we're allergic to commitment. *That's too much work.* Fourth, because we're delighted by the misfortune of others. *That's too much fun.* And in a society that worships incompleteness, the people who do commit, the people who do carry their work to execution, are the ones that inspire us forever. And to be one of those people, all we have to do is finish. Not perfect, just finish.

36. **We all hear voices.** That doesn't make us crazy – it just makes us human. The hard part is when the voice we most want to be quiet starts to torment us. Our natural instinct is to ignore it. Or run away. Or drown it out. Or stick our fingers in our ears and pretend it's not really there. And with most voices, that's a helpful approach. It protects our dream, safeguards our vision and keeps us from demanding excessive reassurance. But it turns out; the voice we most want to be quiet is the voice we most need to hear. It's the one worth listening to, creating from and motivating ourselves with.

37. **We are what we share.** Just look at the last thing we published, posted, profiled, updated, uploaded, streamed, liked, tweeted or clicked. *That's it. That's us. That's who we are, whether we like it or not.* And because the web never forgets – because the web is forever – we better be careful what we put out there. A Georgia teacher got fired for posting videos of binge drinking. A Buffalo congressman resigned after his shirtless pictured surfaced online. A Cisco employee lost her job for publishing negative comments about her position. A British juror was dismissed after disclosing sensitive case information on her profile. Everything matters. Everybody's watching. Everything is a performance.

38. **We can't be in the pretty good business.** We have to be amazing. We have to bring everything inside that we have. We have to figure out a way to blow people away, every time, in the most magical and unexpected way possible. Only then do we have power. Only then do we have choices. And it's worth all the preparation. All the sweat. All the early morning starts and late night finishes. All the moments when the towel stared at us, wondering if we'd give it the satisfaction of landing in the ring. We didn't go through all that bullshit just to show up and not be amazing. Eminem told us to lose ourselves in the music, the moment, to own it and never let it go. Maybe it's time we started acting like it.

39. **We'll never run out of reasons not to do something.** Our capacity to rationalize our way out of anything will always be available. Human beings, more than any other species, have an infinite ability to procrastinate their way to inaction. We can put things off like bumblebees can fly. Eventually, though, we have to decide. To move our dreams out of dream form, we have to figure out what's important to us, honestly admit what we're really afraid of, calculate what we're willing to lose and then go, go, go make something happen. Otherwise it will never happen. The resistance will win. And we'll reluctantly join the ranks of the wannabes, gonnabes and nevergonnabes, reminiscing about dreams we once had, but never did anything about. The exciting part is, no matter how many excuses, no matter how many reasons we have not to do something, all we need is one really good reason to say yes.

40. **When we're willing to do the work, anything is possible.** But not the fun, sexy, stuff. Not the cool parts of the job that our friends can't wait to brag about at parties. The work. *That which we bleed for.* The unglamorous, lonely and unspectacular labor that nobody notices, nobody asks about and nobody remembers. *That which we ache from.* The actual, physical exertion of our bodies working overtime, starting earlier than we prefer and finishing later than we predict. *That which we sneer at.* The daily, tedious practice of things most people wouldn't even consider investing an hour in, even if we think we're above it. *That which we run from.* The bravery to sit down, every day, and give it our best shot, despite the overwhelming impulse to do something else. Without a commitment to that work, everything except what's essential for survival drops away, and we spend the bulk of our time surviving instead of thriving, chasing mediocrity like a dog after its own tail. Which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Dogs are happy creatures. In fact, sometimes I wish I were okay being average, just to make my days easier. But if our goal is to make our name dear to history, if our intent is to leave a trail that we're proud of, then we have no choice but to do the work. To clock in, every day, no matter what. Do that, and people will stop asking how old you are.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

What happens when you wear a nametag twenty-four seven? Even to bed? Just ask Scott Ginsberg. In the beginning, it was just a gimmick to make friends. But soon, his crazy idea didn't seem so crazy. In the past twelve years, Scott's social experiment has evolved into an urban legend, world record, cultural phenomenon and profitable enterprise. Simply google the word *nametag*, and you'll see his work being benchmarked as a case study on human interaction, revolutionizing the way people look at approachability, identity and commitment. As a writer, Scott's authored twenty-five books, produced his own online show on NametagTV.com and reached millions of readers on his an award-winning blog. As a performer, his one-man show has made over six hundred corporate appearances in five countries. And as a media personality, he's done over five hundred interviews in print, television, radio and online outlets, including an induction into the hall of fame of *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*. He blames this on his parents.