

Striving for an Ultimate Goal

Geoff Hudson-Searle

'Fame is part of me and my life as an actor. I enjoy the creative aspects of my life as an actor. I enjoy directing and acting as well. But the bottom line for me is not prestige and power. It's about having an exciting, creative life.'

- Matt Dillon

What is Prestige

What is Prestige in our now world. The Oxford dictionary has its definition as: "prestige, /prɛ'sti:(d)ʒ/, noun: prestige; widespread respect and admiration felt for someone or something on the basis of a perception of their achievements or quality."

Each of us is, to some extent or other, a reflection of the experiences of our lives. However, whether and how we succeed is determined at least in part by how we cope with those experiences and what we learn from them. Everyone has a story, despite difficulties in family life and professional setbacks, the journey to success is the learnings we all have, we all possess the determination, drive and skills to create a successful and happy life, the bigger question is if we choose to use these skills.....for the great of good.

Recently, I sat in an Italian coffee house on the South Bank of the Thames in London – United Kingdom, I thought about those years. Experiencing the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, and I knew that I had been tested in ways that I could never of expected. And yet, I had prevailed. Despite the frustration, anger and fear, I had created a company that fulfilled the vision, I had kept a company alive against all odds, and I had moved it to a point where it was thriving.

I also had learned a lot about myself. I had been forced to recognize my own weaknesses and eccentricities, and I had discovered reserves of strength that I had not known I had. In the process, I had become less judgmental and more accepting of myself and of others.

I realized that leadership forces you to stay true to yourself and to recognize when you are at your best and when you are at your worst; the important thing is to stay focused and keep moving forward. I learned that it is overcoming adversity that brings the most satisfaction, and that achievements are made more meaningful by the struggle it took to achieve them.

I had felt that learning through the ups and downs of my personal and professional life that anything is possible if you believe in yourself and if you set your mind and heart to it. If you want something badly enough, you must be prepared to go after it with everything you have, no matter what the consequences.

The important thing is to decide what you really want. Having time out, I was able to envision a different kind of company, one in which there were shared values and shared dreams. Although there were problems to be solved along the way, I persevered and created that company.

I had the very fortune of learning more about myself by being put into adverse circumstances than I could ever have learned about myself from a psychometric test or a new Oxford business book; it was reserves of inner self and energy that made the journey possible.

Change has a funny habit of teaching you much about yourself; it goes to the core of your own weaknesses, strengths and eccentricities. Leadership forces you to stay true to yourself and recognize times when you are at your best and worst; the key is to stay focused and to make decisions that will look at continuous improvement. Even though this may be small, incremental change, it is positive change you can build upon even though you may be in quicksand.

Business has taught me much about life, learning and sharing knowledge and life stories with my employees and associates. My hopes, fears, beliefs, values and dreams were tested to the limit. I learned that only the difficult things in life truly bring satisfaction, and that achievement is proportional to the struggle needed to get there.

I had no idea what the future might hold, but I was glad that I had followed my dreams. I have often reminisced sipping my favourite coffee, recalling the words of Winston Churchill: *"This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."*

Prestige or Purpose – this is the question?

'I've learned that making a living is not the same thing as making a life'

– Maya Angelou

Chad Albrecht from the Huntsman School of Business wrote an article on productivity and prestige in business ethics research. Based on a survey that was administered to 320 business ethics scholars worldwide, the authors report a ranking of 15 business schools that are perceived to be leaders in the field of business ethics. Based on these same survey results, the authors investigated which factors may have the strongest relationship to individual publication productivity and perceptions of institutional prestige within business ethics research. The results provided several surprising findings that suggest the business ethics field may be anomalous in academe in terms of the emergence of productivity and prestige.

Efficiency at doing a certain task, in the workplace or otherwise, is strongly influenced by how motivated individuals are. Exploring new ways to motivate employees is often at the top of a company's agenda. Traditionally identified motivators in Western economies primarily include salary and prestige, often complemented by meaning, creation, challenge, ownership and identity.

Whether in our private or professional life, every day we complete a certain number of tasks, some of which are more or less pleasurable to do. Of course, when motivated or stimulated to do certain tasks, we often complete them faster, better and without procrastination, even when the tasks themselves are not very pleasurable. Motivation in general comes from a wide range of personal or social factors, such as financial compensation (salary), recognition by the colleagues or superiors (prestige), or satisfaction coming from personal achievements. It comes as no surprise that employers and companies are systematically seeking new ways to stimulate their employees towards being more productive and happier at the same time. In conditions of radical social and cultural changes, in particular those related to the emerging knowledge economy, enterprises are facing new challenges to motivate and retain key workforce, which is the focus factor of competitiveness in the market.

So, while perceived prestige in the industry continues to be an important factor, it seems that priorities have certainly shifted in the marketplace, and people today are most concerned now with finding a workplace that suits their lifestyle and personality.

It really does not matter what is motivating you but the fact that you recognize it. It is exhausting to deny your true motivations. If you are motivated by money, growth, possessions, your family, partner and friends – that’s great. Accept it. Run with it. Maximize those desires. Work hard, get paid, do it again. When you harness your motivations, you can achieve a lot. It’s a source of energy and gives your work purpose.

But ask the question frequently, “What’s motivating me right now?” Your motivations change on a regular basis. At some points you will be motivated by the work, and at others you will want the kudos and applause. Whatever it is, pay, prestige or process, embrace the motivation at that moment. Let it fuel your passion, your prestige may well become the motivational factor and energy behind your purpose.

Writing is another channel has really changed my life. I have always believed that it is your right to speak truthfully in all matters that concern you and to speak from the heart.

It has been an overwhelming experience to receive emails and phone calls from people across all walks of life wanting to share their experiences, their story. Entrepreneurs, business people, students, children, and charitable causes have approached me for key note sessions, general advice, and inspiration leadership.

I have been overwhelmed with inquiries but will continue to expand and express the journey that each and every one of us deserves, within our heart-motivated purpose in life, because there is a ‘journey to success.’

Every audience has a different dynamic, a different rhythm, and a different reaction. The audience wants, needs, and expects pertinent, real-life information to enrich and support their lives and importantly what they’re facing. I believe it was my destiny in life to push things to the limit. You only get one chance to make an impression. I gave ‘Freedom After the Sharks’ and ‘Meaningful Conversations’ every opportunity I had of the events that took place for what I believed to be right and true.

In life you survive. You move on but with a purpose. A great philosopher and friend in the US once told me *‘that you are in this world by divine right and you have the right to reach your highest potential through your own uniqueness’*. I know so many people who are only in bliss when they are miserable. They blame their parents, their spouse, their family, the system, their employers, their friends for their individual failings.

You know what’s amazing — and I’ve said this for years — you have the capacity to love and be loved with an open heart. You can do whatever you have to do to get past your problem, you can do it. The question is how much you want the dream or the purpose.

It’s your quiet inner drive and tenacious disciplined focus that will set yourself apart from those who seemingly fall by the way side. This may sound a little strange but when I’m asked about the key to my journey to success, it has always been that guttural ignorant persistence. You do more, you give a little more of yourself in everything you do until it becomes a natural part of your lifestyle, it is also important to be a mentor to those who need help, encouragement and share.

I believe we know enough now to see which strategies will increase productivity, emotional and human engagement, and strategic planning and development for life and growth.

As social beings, we want to trust each other, our character and our integrity.

The speed of the Internet, technology and importantly how people behave on the Internet can be a constant treadmill. Consider the proportion of people who say that other people can be trusted, the proportion who belong to social organizations, the divorce rate, the unemployment rate, the quality of government, and religious belief. Unfortunately, over the last 50 years levels of trust have fallen drastically in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, though not in continental Europe. In the United States and Britain, the percentage of adults who think that most people can be trusted is half that of the 1950s. Policies that encourage trust are thus extremely important; these include moral education in schools, and policies to build stable families, communities and workplaces.

Why H2H and a sense of purpose is still what real people focus upon

By now you've probably heard a lot about wearables, living services, the 'Internet of Things' and smart materials. As designers working in these realms, we've begun to think about even weirder and wilder things, envisioning a future where evolved technology is embedded inside our digestive tracts, sense organs, blood vessels, and even our cells.

Let's talk about a scourge of modern times. There is so much stuff to watch, read, listen to, buy, eat or learn about. The world is available at our fingertips at any moment. It feels glorious but also horribly, paralyzingly overwhelming.

Should I wade into Spotify's sea of every song ever recorded or give up and listen to my downloaded copy of Beyonce's "Crazy for Love" for the 47,000th time? Psychologist Barry Schwartz called this the "Paradox of choice" in his 2004 book of the same name. Like many ideas that come out of TED Talks, it is too simplistic to say more choices are counterproductive, but I think we've all experienced the feeling.

Naturally, technology companies have some ideas about how to help people discover things and select among the flood of options — and make money in the process. And even they are recognizing the limits of technology in helping people stay informed and entertained.

To see the future, first we must understand the past. Humans have been interfacing with machines for thousands of years. We seem to be intrinsically built to desire this communion with the made world. This blending of the mechanical and biological has often been described as a "natural" evolutionary process by such great thinkers as Marshall McLuhan in the '50s and more recently Kevin Kelly in his seminal book *What Technology Wants*. So, by looking at the long timeline of computer design we can see waves of change and future ripples.

The effects of technological change on the global economic structure are creating immense transformations in the way companies and nations organize production, trade goods, invest capital, and develop new products and processes. Sophisticated information technologies permit instantaneous communication among the far-flung operations of global enterprises. New materials are revolutionizing sectors as diverse as construction and communications. Advanced manufacturing technologies have altered long-standing patterns of productivity and employment. Improved air and sea transportation has greatly accelerated the worldwide flow of people and goods.

All this has both created and mandated greater interdependence among firms and nations. The rapid rate of innovation and the dynamics of technology flows mean that comparative advantage is short-lived. To maximize returns, arrangements such as transnational mergers and shared production agreements are sought to bring together partners with complementary interests and strengths. This permits both developed and developing countries to harness technology more efficiently, with the expectation of creating higher standards of living for all involved.

Rapid technological innovation and the proliferation of transnational organizations are driving the formation of a global economy that sometimes conflicts with nationalistic concerns about maintaining comparative advantage and competitiveness. It is indeed a time of transition for firms and governments alike.

In the markets of the United Kingdom and the United States, we are constantly seeing 'flexibility' and 'change' to our economies; this evidence is continuing with the 'Gig Economy,' the millennials and a new operating business economy. There are huge advantages to inflexibility and predictability, as continental Europeans appreciate. The evidence shows that continuous re-optimization is not always the best route to building solid, sustainable foundations for business and relationships.

People also want to be trusted and respected themselves. This requires that they have some responsibility and autonomy. Most of us like to feel we are working well or helping others, because we could not expect to be respected otherwise. That is a key element in the motivation to work, the satisfaction of the professional norm. Yet in recent years employers have used more and more financial incentives to motivate people: Performance-related pay has been creeping in everywhere, including the public service.

With all of these considerations, are mainstream economists right or wrong in how they approach our social and economic problems? Partly right, partly wrong. Here is the good part: Each individual knows more about himself or herself than anyone else does. So, there are huge gains all round if we can freely exchange goods and services with each other, including our labour. This is especially so where markets are large and well-informed and no one affects anyone else except through the process of voluntary exchange. Indeed, economists have correctly shown that if these conditions exist and contracts can be enforced and people can start sharing within a 'shared economy,' the outcome will be fully 'efficient.' In other words, everyone will be happy as is possible without someone else being less happy. This important claim helps to explain the extraordinary success of post-war capitalism in producing material advance.

Yet, why did this advance not guarantee a rise in personal happiness? The reason is that many of the most important things that touch us do not reach us through voluntary exchange. Nor have our tastes, expectations and norms remained unchanged, and these too affect our happiness.

Values in people can also change. In the last 50 years we have become increasingly independent and individualistic. We are ever more influenced by the Internet and versions of the 'survival of the fittest;' Charles Darwin said, *'It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change.'* Describing 'the invisible hand,' Adam Smith said: *'The great source of both the misery and disorders of human life, seems to arise from over-rating the difference between one permanent situation and another. Avarice over-rates the difference between poverty and riches: ambition, that between a private and a public station: vain-glory, that between obscurity and extensive reputation.'*

The person under the influence of any of those extravagant passions, is not only miserable in his actual situation, but is often disposed to disturb the peace of society, in order to arrive at that which

he so foolishly admires. The slightest observation, however, might satisfy him, that, in all the ordinary situations of human life, a well-disposed mind may be equally calm, equally cheerful, and equally contented. Some of those situations may, no doubt, deserve to be preferred to others: but none of them can deserve to be pursued with that passionate ardour which drives us to violate the rules either of prudence or of justice; or to corrupt the future tranquillity of our minds, either by shame from the remembrance of our own folly, or by remorse from the horror of our own injustice.'

The true values of Human 2 Human

My final thought in the matter is that the answer to technological overload is not less technology but more humanity.

Digital transformation, solving problems with technology, exponential growth through technology, the integration of humans/machines, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things etc. Like it or not, there is no way out, technology has taken over already: I lived without a Smartphone for a few weeks to find out that you soon get excluded from communities, groups, discussions and business.

The problem is not development of new technology, this is nothing new for humanity. The problem is the speed and the major impact it creates for us. It is paradoxical, but humans have the capacity to create innovation and technology with which, at the same time, they have problems keeping up with, technically, emotionally and as a society. We are used to slow, incremental change. Only few people can keep up with the speed and nature of change, most of us get anxious and try to row backwards.

The most important things for our survival are not digital: air, water, food, clothes, emotions, the warmth of a human body next to us. Spending time with people living in a strong connection with and in and from nature was eye opening: we do not live in and with the nature, we are a part of nature, fully integrated with it.

We should ask: "If technology was supposed to make our lives easier and better, why is everybody so exhausted?". "How can we stay present and awake in a world of distraction and consumption?"

My belief is that a society cannot flourish without some sense of shared purpose. The current pursuit of self-realization will not work. If your sole duty is to achieve the best for yourself, life becomes just too stressful and too isolated and lonely, and you will be set up to fail. Instead, you need to feel you exist for something larger, and that very thought takes off some of the pressure.

We desperately need a concept of a common purpose, a common vision and a sense of working together to achieve the one overall goal. Human happiness comes from the outside and from within. The two are not in contradiction. The secret is compassion towards oneself and others, and the principle of the greatest happiness is essentially the expression that can all share connections. Perhaps these are the cornerstones of our future culture.

I believe now is the moment to define our terms. Technology is fast, and fast is getting faster, fast is busy, controlling, aggressive, hurried, analytical, stressed, superficial, impatient, active, quantity-over-quality. Slow is the opposite: calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity. It is about making real and meaningful connections – with people not machines, culture, work, food, everything.

We do not want high turnover in jobs, in housing or in marriages, except where clear advantages outweigh the human and other costs. Nor do we want our firms and public services to be repeatedly restructured, with massive loss of trust at every stage.

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With all of these considerations, are mainstream economists right or wrong in how they approach our social and economic problems? Partly right, partly wrong. Here is the good part: Each individual knows more about himself or herself than anyone else does. So, there are huge gains all round if we can freely exchange goods and services with each other, including our labour. This is especially so where markets are large and well-informed and no one affects anyone else except through the process of voluntary exchange. Indeed, economists have correctly shown that if these conditions exist and contracts can be enforced and people can start sharing within a 'shared economy,' the outcome will be fully 'efficient.' In other words, everyone will be happy as is possible without someone else being less happy. This important claim helps to explain the extraordinary success of post-war capitalism in producing material advance.

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From 'Your Forces and How to Use Them,' by Christian D. Larson

Promise Yourself

*To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.
To talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet.*

*To make all your friends feel that there is something in them
To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true.*

*To think only the best, to work only for the best, and to expect only the best.
To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.*

*To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.
To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.*

*To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.
To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.*

*To think well of yourself and to proclaim this fact to the world, not in loud words but great deeds.
To live in faith that the whole world is on your side so long as you are true to the best that is in you.*

Final thought

My final thought in the matter is that a society cannot flourish without some sense of shared purpose. The current pursuit of self-realisation will not work. If your sole duty is to achieve the best for yourself, life becomes just too stressful and too lonely, and you will be set up to fail. Instead, you need to feel you exist for something larger, and that very thought takes off some of the pressure.

'find something more important than you are,' philosopher Dan Dennett once said in discussing the secret of happiness, 'and dedicate your life to it.' But how, exactly, do we find that? Surely, it isn't by luck. I myself am a firm believer in the power of curiosity and choice as the engine of fulfilment, but precisely how you arrive at your true calling is an intricate and highly individual dance of discovery. Still, there are certain factors and certain choices on your journey to success that make it easier and more worthwhile.....

The question is, how much do you truly want your dream and do you have the courage to pursue it?

About Geoffrey Hudson-Searle

Geoff is an international commercial director, Non-Executive Director, CMO, CEO and strategist, lecturing regularly on the principles of integrated strategy at worldwide forums, rated by Agilience as a Top 250 Harvard Business School authority, covering strategic management and management consulting, and has over 25 years of experience in the business and management arena, an author of his first book 'Freedom after the Sharks' and recently 'Meaningful Conversations'. A member and fellow of the Institute of Directors, associate of The Business Institute of Management and a co-founder and board member of the Neustar International Security Council (NISC). He holds a Masters degree in Business Administration. Having worked for corporate companies Citibank N.A, MICE Group Plc, Enigma Design, MMT Inc, Kaspersky Laboratory, Bartercard Plc, and RG Group around the world, Geoff has vast international experience working with SME and International clients. International clients with which Geoff has worked include the British Government, HP, Compaq, BT, Powergen, Intel, ARM, Watsila Group, Atari, Barclays Bank, Societe Generale, Western Union, Chase and Volvo. Geoff has worked in a broad range of industries including software, technology and banking which has given him a range of different experiences and perspectives of what can work, the importance of good people, process and how these can be applied and amplified to deliver results in different scenarios and paradigms. Geoff is known for bringing in a fresh and sometimes challenging the status-quo, with a strategic approach delivering successful change management programmes and launching companies and products internationally that deliver results. For example he once started with a company carrying a loss of £15M, and responsible for executing a new 24 month plan for generating £60M of solution sales revenue across 12 countries in EMEA. Geoff's areas of expertise lie in brand strategy, business communications, business integration, business development and improvement, capital raise activities, pre-IPO planning, capital raise transactions, M&A with full P&L responsibility, which ideally equips him to strengthen global companies, develop SME and international business, and marketing strategies.

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