

**element** [noun]:

a component or fundamental  
constituent of matter.

An essential part of something  
more abstract.

- *Webster's Dictionary*

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**element** [noun]:

what matters. - *David Vittoria*

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## the 8

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Disclaimer: The stories contained in this book are based on actual people and organizations. In some cases, the names of individuals have been changed to protect their anonymity.

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Designed by Steve Wulf

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-935537-56-4  
5 1 2 9 5 >



This book is dedicated to my courageous  
clients. Your honesty and openness  
have inspired this book and I am  
privileged to have shared in your journeys.



A special note of thanks goes out to  
my dear friends and colleagues  
**Eddie Marmol** and **Lourdes Cocchiarella**.  
Your insight into our work as change  
agents was invaluable to this project.

live **the 8**<sup>™</sup> ...

do **what matters**<sup>™</sup>.

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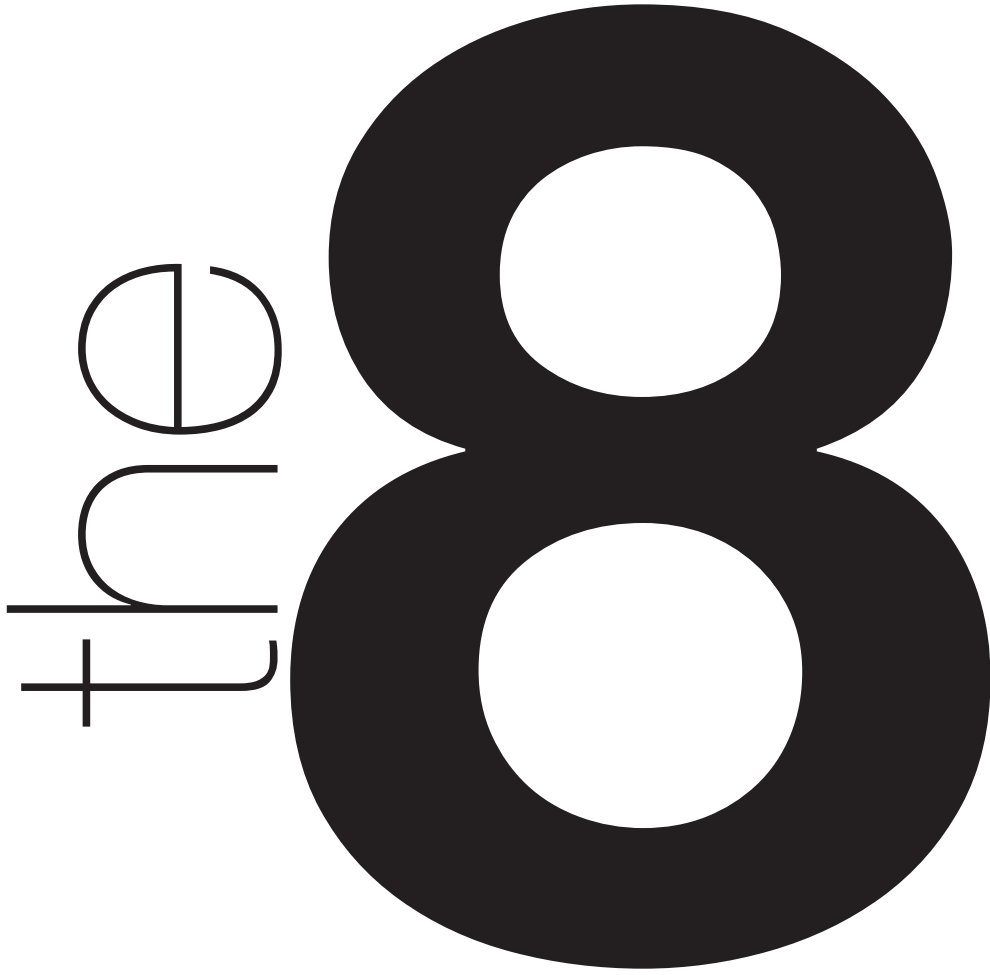
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Basic Elements to Greater  
Happiness, Health & Productivity

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DAVID VITTORIA

***WALKTHE TALK.COM***



***The struggle comes when we  
sense a gap between the clock  
and the compass – when what  
we do doesn't contribute to what  
is most important in our lives.***

– Stephen Covey



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# INTRODUCTION

In the twenty years I've spent as a helping professional, I've discovered that authentic happiness, holistic health and purposeful productivity are critical success factors. They are three of the key requirements for achieving one's vision – whether "one" is an individual, a team or an organization. Happiness, health and productivity. They are conditions of satisfaction that must be met and given special and constant attention in order for any person or organization to achieve high performance.

Unfortunately, for most people trying to live their purpose – and in most businesses striving to shape their organizational culture – these conditions largely go unmet. It's no wonder, then, that workers are disengaged, customers are dissatisfied, and organizations often have a difficult time getting employees to adopt their mission, vision and values.

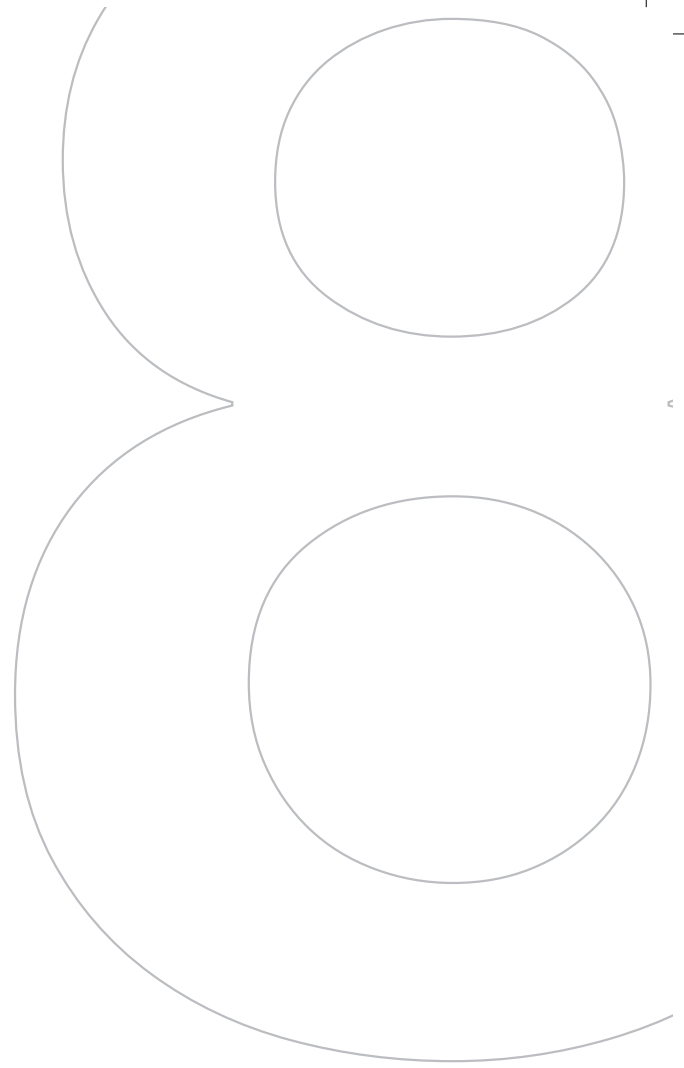
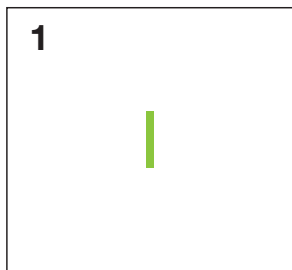
**The 8** shares the stories I've heard and the lessons I've learned about what it takes to be fit and fulfilled, and to get your highest priorities achieved each day. The book is inspired by the real-life experiences of some enlightened individuals and organizations that have shifted their energy and attention towards what matters most to them. It's about happy people who are living their dreams. And it's about healthy companies that embrace both purpose and profit – whose employees are engaged, whose customers keep coming back, and whose competitors have taken notice.

**The 8** is based on my work in over 15,000 hours of coaching and counseling sessions and more than 2,000 hours of on-site observations in small businesses, schools, non-profits, corporations and governments all over the world. This book is the by-product of hundreds of interviews with people at all levels, from the boardroom down. The collective wisdom and the actions that form **the 8** will teach you that whether you're one person, one team or an entire organization, when you find your direction, speak your truth and live your values, *shift happens!*

The real people and organizations you will read about illustrate each of the eight basic elements through powerful lessons of service, strength and sacrifice. Following each story you'll find tips and exercises to help you apply these guiding principles to your life and inspire you to greater heights.

You'll find that many of the challenges you may be facing – like negativity, stress or ineffective communication – can be overcome by simply investing more time in doing what matters most to you at work and at home. As you'll learn in this little book, I have some big ideas about how you can create real and meaningful change in your life and in the lives of others. It's elemental really.

---



## INVESTIGATE

discover your  
purpose

***Believe in something big.  
Your life is worth a noble motive.***

– Walter Anderson

In November of 2006,  
my company was hired by The Atlantic Philanthropies,  
one of the world's largest non-profit foundations.  
Before signing our service agreement – as is our  
standard practice before partnering with a client – we  
spent hours researching “The AP” to learn more about  
its mission, vision and values. It's a critical first step for  
us and for our clients so that we can determine fit, or  
what we call *alignment of purpose*. It was in doing this  
research on The AP that I first learned about Charles  
“Chuck” Feeney: “the billionaire who wasn't.”

Born poor in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Chuck Feeney  
co-founded Duty Free Shoppers in 1960 – the largest  
duty-free retail chain in the world. By 1988, the Forbes  
400 listed him as the 23<sup>rd</sup> richest American. But he  
wasn't. He wore shabby clothes, didn't own a car or  
a house, always flew coach, and wore a \$5 watch.  
By the time he mistakenly appeared on Forbes' list,  
Chuck Feeney had, very quietly, transferred the bulk of  
his vast wealth over to two foundations that were the  
origins of The AP.

By the end of 2009, and with Feeney as an active member of its board, The AP had made grants totaling over \$5 billion – striving to fulfill Feeney’s mission of bringing lasting change to people around the world who need it the most. While he had amassed a fortune selling liquor and luxury handbags, Feeney always believed that his true calling was to give back and to leave the world a better place than he found it. That passionate purpose hasn’t changed since he made his first few cents shoveling snow off of the New Jersey sidewalks. Even as a boy, he was blazing a trail.

Today, The AP focuses its efforts exclusively on four critical social issues: aging, children and youth, population health, and human rights. It seeks to increase opportunities from the youngest to the oldest among us, with a particular focus on communities facing discrimination, poverty, and other barriers to social equity – and to protect human rights for all people. They have offices around the globe, from Australia to Vietnam, and they help vulnerable people connected by a history of conflict or inequality.

At Chuck Feeney's insistence, the foundation will spend its entire multibillion dollar endowment by 2016 and permanently close its doors by 2020.

*I had one idea that never changed in my mind –  
that you should use your wealth to help people.*

– Chuck Feeney

In the four years that we've worked closely with The AP staff, I've learned from them about Chuck Feeney's purpose of "giving while living." What has most impressed me about this philosophy is how Feeney's core notion – that one should address urgent issues *now* in order to create the most meaningful change in the world – is not only evident in The AP's grant-making practices, but also in how many of the organization's employees live their lives outside of work.

In witnessing firsthand the fulfillment of Chuck Feeney's purpose every day, most of them have been inspired to discover (and often, rediscover) their own purpose in life and become individual agents for change.



Just like with Feeney, for the staff at The AP it's not about making money – it's about making a difference.

You don't have to be a billionaire to change the world.

You don't even have to want to change the world.

Regardless of your net worth, you can make a substantial contribution to *your* world by discovering your purpose and start pursuing your grand ambitions immediately.

Chuck Feeney serves as an example that at any age and any stage of our lives, we can become inspired to identify why we're here and what we feel we must do in order to leave every person we meet, every thing we do, and every place we go better than we found it.

I had a client who once told me that the greatest day of his life was a Monday. It was the day his aspirations became clear and he accepted his life as his own. He decided that he was done – done relying on others for his own happiness, done allowing others to determine his real worth and done wasting his time trying to fulfill someone's else's dreams for him. On Sunday he was bored and unfulfilled. On Monday he was free!

This life is a journey. It's yours and you are responsible for it and you can start it over at any time. So, instead of lamenting *Why me?* ask *Why **not** me?* Instead of wondering *Why now?* ask yourself this question – the same question Chuck Feeney asked when his closest advisers suggested he rethink the timing of his life-changing decision to fulfill his purpose and give away his fortune – *Why **not** now?*

---

Here are four things to  
consider as you discover  
*your* purpose . . .

## 1 What Are You Passionate About?

There are things that you are naturally great at and that you do simply because you enjoy doing them. They make you feel as if you have done something wonderful. Identifying your passions will give you a big clue as to what your life purpose may be.

So think it through and write them down.

## 2 What Gets You Fired Up?

Make a list of the things that automatically get you excited, even angry. What are the subjects that instantly have you plugged in and fired up from the moment someone brings them up? Maybe you're sensitive to the topics of domestic violence or clean drinking water. These are things that tug at your heart and that can make you go from pleasant and nice, to motivated and taking charge on a moment's notice. These are things that might point you in the direction of your life purpose.

### 3 Pinpoint Your Deepest Thoughts

What things occupy your mind most of the time? When you get bored and find yourself drifting off, what are you daydreaming about? Identifying what you are dreaming of or longing for could help you identify things that are missing in your life and could be requirements for a big life change. Write down some brief notes about what's on your mind most of the time.

### 4 Connect the Dots

Now you have a list of things, situations and concepts that really mean a lot to you on a very personal level and it is time to start connecting the dots. Find correlations between your passions and the things that get you fired up and occupy your thoughts. These are all things that ultimately will lead you toward your purpose. The big life change you may be searching for probably lies within this list you've just created.

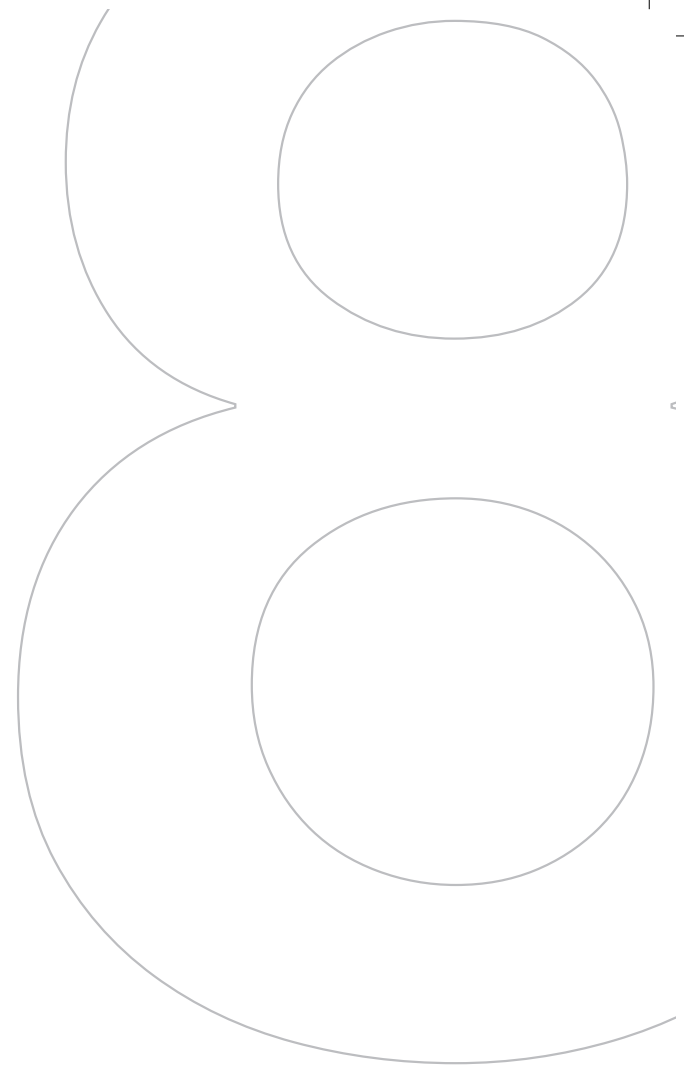


## INITIATE

start right  
now

***With one eye on the  
past and one eye  
looking towards the future,  
Scott, you can't possibly  
see the present.***

– David Vittoria



Those words came out of my mouth in a 2007 coaching session with the president of a successful electronics company in Miami, a new client at the time. As soon as I said them, I began to worry about the present I might soon be seeing – one where I might lose a client after being a little too direct. While Scott stared out the window of his opulent corner office (his vision appearing just fine), I glanced outside with him – with an eye towards my own future.

What happened next was completely unexpected. Scott acknowledged that he was experiencing a real watershed moment in our meeting. He realized how depleted he had become recently. Not by the innumerable day-to-day tasks he was responsible for in operating a multimillion dollar corporation, but by the emotional energy he had been investing in what *could have been* at his company had he only done a handful of things differently in the previous eighteen months. He shared how the negative thoughts about his past perceived failures had spawned an immense fear about the future consequences that may arise from those mistakes.

I asked how much time he thought he'd been investing in what *was* and what *might be*. Scott guessed it had probably grown to about twenty percent of his time – not just his time at work mind you, but twenty percent of his waking moments at the office and at home. By our calculations, Scott had been spending more than four hours a day preoccupied by things he had no real control over anymore. “My worry and regret,” Scott said, “have become a part-time job. Yeah, that’s not good, David. I have a tough enough time doing one job.”

For the next thirty minutes Scott spoke while twirling his pen and looking pensively out that window. I just listened. I learned that he ran four miles every morning. He would read something positive, something motivational every day while drinking coffee before leaving for the office. He would listen to a book on CD in the car for his drive in to work and get amped-up for the busy day ahead. He had morning huddles with his leadership team to encourage them to have a productive workday. He even wrote “Sales Canons” which he emailed his sales manager every Monday morning – with a quick, powerful message that supported the company’s customer-centric philosophy.

In that corner office that day, and in one of the most defining moments of my career, I watched Scott fall awake.

It's important to note here that Scott hadn't been spending his career or his life fully asleep. He's very bright, extremely capable, and had become a well-respected leader at his company and in his industry. A genius with numbers and a relentless dedication to customer service, he had grown the company's profits by at least 15% every year for the last nine years. And their annual employee turnover rate (notoriously high in his business – around 40%) was consistently at around 10%.

Scott was, by everyone's account, a caring, passionate, engaged person who led his company right and motivated his people to be their best. He just forgot that he, too, was one of "his people."

As part of our executive coaching process, I had spent about twenty hours meeting with Scott's employees. One of the things many of them said they admired about him was his core belief about attitude: that one's mindset



going into something – a project, a meeting, a sales call – even tackling problems that may arise – was the single greatest predictor of that problem being solved, or that project, meeting, or sales call being successful.

His staff told me that he constantly preached his mantra of *Don't just start something. Start it right!*

A long-time warehouse employee named Robert even described an off-site event everyone attended in 2005 – where the words “Start. Start right. Start right now.” were handwritten in marker and tacked on a training easel.

Robert couldn't remember ever seeing that sign again, but recalled how much he smiled when he saw it that day and how often he remembered those words while searching for the motivation to move boxes on and off of trucks at the loading dock.

Over the years, I've heard hundreds of employees quote their company's mission statement and robotically recite their organization's core values. The employees who worked for Scott though, they got it and they believed it.

They appreciated Scott's words and they knew he meant them. I discovered that nearly all of the staff I spoke to had bought in to this idea of starting everything they did with passion and purpose, at work and even at home. I was impressed.

In our next session together, I started by asking Scott a question. "What do you think your people admire most about you?" He thought about it and said, "I'm guessing my positivity. I try to inundate them with positive messages and I always talk about the importance of kicking something off with the right energy – the right thoughts and the right feelings behind your actions. 'When you have things to do,' I tell them, 'start those things with a positive attitude, no matter how mundane the task may seem, and you'll finish strong with the outcome you're striving for.'"

"Wow. Nicely done," I said. "You nailed it. Now let's pick up where we left off in our last discussion. You were talking to me about how much time you'd been wasting by investing in your worry and your regret." He got the point.

What Scott and I learned together was that his downward spiral into what we called his “stinking thinking” had begun many months previous, when he stopped doing all of those things that were working for him. He stopped running, reading for pleasure and listening to things that soothed or motivated him. He wasn’t very inspiring anymore and he had ceased to act upon the very principle that appeared to drive employee productivity company-wide. He stopped starting his day *right*.

He made a commitment to himself, which he shared with me aloud, that things were about to change. And boy did they. I was in this company’s offices recently and I popped my head in Scott’s office on the way out. We exchanged quick “hellos” and “good-byes,” but as I turned to leave, there on the wall, on a big piece of creased poster board and in purple marker, read the words: “Start. Start right. Start right now.” I smiled.

Here are three tips on  
how *you* can start things  
off right, *right now* . . .

## 1 **Get Aligned**

If you encounter resistance while attempting to reach a goal or perform certain tasks, chances are it's either something you really don't want to be doing (e.g., an old goal that may not serve you anymore) or you're operating from someone else's agenda. These endeavors don't support your priorities and you'll continue to feel "off" throughout your involvement in such misaligned activities.

Take the time to align your goals with your priorities. Otherwise, you'll feel confined or powerless to make changes – allowing circumstances or other people to influence or control you. Discover what you truly want by aligning your goals with the important priorities in your life.

## 2 **Ditch the Past**

Most of us walk around with excess baggage. We carry our personal histories – with our successes, failures, attachments, obligations, relationships, thoughts, feelings and habits. It's time to start packing lighter, because those extra bags will cost you! Dump your baggage by getting rid of yesterday.

### 3 Put Off Fear

If you occasionally procrastinate, here's where that can come in handy. Instead of worrying now, put it off. Schedule a time to worry later, or just decide that you'll be afraid when you get around to it. For now, give yourself permission to have peace of mind and begin your to-do list with some positive energy. Permit your fears to pass over you and through you. Since you're already pumped with some courage after moving out of the past, remember that courage is not the absence of fear, it's the ability to face it.

*You have a clean slate every day  
you wake up. You have a  
chance every single morning to  
be the person you want to be.  
Decide today's going to be the day.  
Say it: "This is going to be my day!"*

– Brendon Burchard

"This is going to be my day!"

**Today, I will be the person I want to be by...**

...doing these things **more**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

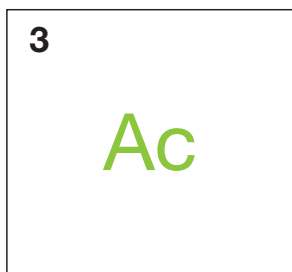
...doing these things **better**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

...doing these things **differently**:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

*Start right now! Use this page today and consider  
writing these out each morning.*



## ACTIVATE

leverage your  
strengths

***Enter every activity without  
giving mental recognition to the  
possibility of defeat. Concentrate  
on your strengths instead of  
your weaknesses ... on your  
powers instead of your problems.***

– Paul Meyer

I was Roy's ninth counselor in three years. He was in numerous detoxification clinics, inpatient rehabilitation centers, outpatient programs and had seen four therapists before joining my caseload. He had been fired from three previous jobs, each time for stealing from his employer. He had stolen cars, broken into houses, written fraudulent checks, vandalized property, transported narcotics across state lines and attempted to kill a law enforcement officer. He had recently overdosed twice and been pronounced clinically dead just weeks before coming into treatment. Roy was an addict and on the day I met him it was his birthday. Roy was turning twenty-two years old.

We met in my office in September of 1996. I was, at the time, a substance abuse counselor working in a long-term residential treatment facility. The program was specifically designed for "retreads" – hardcore addicts with multiple treatment episodes and numerous, unsuccessful attempts to stay clean. It was often the last stop for people like Roy, in end stage addiction and facing jail time or a prison sentence.



Like many people in their first individual sessions, Roy was quiet. He looked sad and tired. A decade of heroin, methamphetamine, alcohol and marijuana abuse had taken its toll and Roy looked like he was closer to forty than twenty. I read through his intake assessment and moved around to the opposite side of my desk so I could sit next to him. He made no eye contact and sat motionless with his arms crossed. After reading his entire history, I tossed his chart on my desk and said, “Hey, man, you want to take a walk?” He slowly looked up at me, shrugged his shoulders and then followed me out the door.

We strolled outside for about an hour. I told him about the rules, went over the schedule with him and asked him a few questions. “I read about everything you did before you got here, Roy,” I said, “so why don’t you tell me about yourself.” “You read the report, didn’t you?” he asked. “Yep, sure did. But I didn’t ask about what you did that got you here; I asked you to tell me about *you*. Are you telling me that you are what you’ve done?”

He cracked a wry smile and lit a cigarette. “Ben Franklin was a pretty wise man, you know. He didn’t just sit around getting hopped up on Applejack and decide to fly kites in thunderstorms.” Having no earthly idea where he was going with this, I did what all good clinicians do. I nodded my head, smiled faintly and said, “Go on.” Roy did. “Ben Franklin said, ‘Hide not your talents, they for use were made. What is a sundial in the shade?’” “So tell me about *your* talents” I deftly replied. “I think our time’s up today,” Roy said. Then he stepped on his cigarette and walked back into the building.

Three days later I had a family session with Roy and his parents. We all sat in my office, and the session with them began like Roy’s had a few days earlier – with sadness and silence. After his parents and I got acquainted, I asked his father if he’d like to begin by telling me about his son. “Tell me something about Roy that I don’t know,” I requested. “Not about his arrests or pending court dates. Not about what he’s done wrong, or the litany of charges against him right now. Maybe we can start today by talking about Roy’s strengths.” Silence.

After what seemed like an eternity, his mother asked me a question in a calm, strong voice. “Do you know what my son has done?” she asked. Roy’s head dropped, and he stared at the floor. I didn’t answer, I just locked eyes with her. She was looking at me intensely. “This young man,” she said slowly, “was walking when he was only months old. He was reading before he turned two. He speaks three languages. He graduated at the top of his class in high school, lettered in two sports, got offered a baseball scholarship at the University of Georgia, an academic scholarship at Emory, and a music scholarship at Duke. He had at least twenty close friends in high school. He used to read to the blind. He used to tuck his little sister in at night, every night, and read to her with us listening in the hallway. He volunteered at a shelter. He was a wonderful brother. Our son is a brilliant and loving young man.” I looked over at Roy and he was crying. Then I noticed that all three of them were in tears.

That session lasted two hours. Afterwards, I walked his parents out to their car. I waved to his mother in the passenger seat; she was still holding the tissue box from my office. I turned to walk back inside and Roy’s

father called my name. As I turned, he asked if he could give me a hug. “Sure,” I said. He gripped me tightly, then pushed me away slowly and rested his hands on my shoulders. “I’m usually the one who talks in these situations, just so you know. You asking that question about Roy – about what’s right with our son,” tears were pouring down his cheeks, “no one has ever asked that before, not that way, David. Please help my boy. He’s a good boy and we love him.”

I made it a point to find Roy right after our staff meeting the next morning. I pulled him out of a group therapy session and we went back to my office. We sat down, and I explained to him how the treatment planning process worked. “We take this five-page document here,” I said, waving a blank Treatment Plan around, “and I am supposed to write out five things for you: your diagnosis, the problems you’ve got, the goals you need to meet in order to successfully complete treatment, short-term objectives that will help you attain those bigger goals, and assign what we call ‘target dates’ to all this stuff.” “Uh...okay,” Roy said. Then I ripped the Treatment Plan up into tiny bits and threw them on the floor. “But that’s not what we’re going to do. YOU, my friend, are going to write your own plan.”

I handed Roy a stack of copy paper. “I want you to take the next twenty-four hours and make your own lists. Start by taking your personal inventory, Roy – but of your strengths, not your weaknesses. I’d like you to then write out your goals for the rest of your life, and break them down into short-, mid- and long-range categories. Short ones are for the next six months you’re going to be here, mid-range goals are going to be for the time you’re locked up – because we know you’re going to do time, and your long-range plans are for your life after incarceration. But you can’t just write out a character defect and then list the goal as being the disappearance of that shortcoming, Roy. I’d rather you write down a talent and list how that talent is going to help keep you clean – one day at a time. Make sense?”

Roy didn’t look up at me; he stared at the stack of paper I handed him and quietly mouthed the words of Ben Franklin that he saw written at the top of each of the ten separate sheets of paper:

*Hide not your talents, they for use were  
made. What is a sundial in the shade?*

“Now,” I said, standing up and offering a handshake, “go fly a kite!”

Over the next six months, Roy did everything he was asked to do in treatment. He worked harder than any person I had counseled before or since, and he followed the plan. He had listed twenty-two strengths – one for each year he was alive. And he used those talents every day — to help him stay clean, to help the friends he made in treatment, to make amends to those he had harmed, and to heal his family. He got discharged in April of 1997, and was transported by the U.S. Marshals Service to a medium-security facility in his home state. The day he was loaded into that car, his family came in to see him off and to say good-bye to me and the staff.

While Roy sat in the backseat of a black Suburban, his parents gave us all hugs. Roy’s father walked outside with his arm around me. There, right outside the main entrance, he introduced me to a beautiful little girl named Melissa. Melissa was Roy’s seven-year-old sister, but she didn’t visit him while he was in treatment and I’d never even spoken to her. “Missy has something to give you,” Roy’s dad said.

I knelt down, and said “Hi, I’m David.” From behind her back, Missy pulled out a worn-out, hard-cover children’s book called *What’s the Big Idea, Ben Franklin?* “My brother asked me to give this to you. I really like this book. He used to read it to me all the time. Now you can have it and that’s okay with me.” I opened the front cover of the book and there, in Roy’s handwriting, were these words:

***Dear David – Thank you for believing in me and for helping me to see my “limitless potential.” You had faith for the both of us. You taught me that I am not a bad person, just a good person who has made some bad mistakes. I’ll be cool, one day at a time. S.I.T.***

***Love, Roy.***

In 2001, Roy was released from prison. He moved into a halfway house in Georgia, where he lived for two years. Roy then moved to western Pennsylvania, where he still lives today. He is thirty-five years old, a successful musician, and touring with his incredibly popular band comprised of four other members – three of whom are recovering addicts. Roy is married, and has a young daughter.

In September of 2006, I received an envelope in the mail. It had Roy's medallion inside – given in Alcoholics Anonymous to acknowledge ten consecutive years of sobriety. There was a note in the envelope that read: “Still flying...just **not** high!” I have his note on a bulletin board in my office, his medallion in my desk, and his list of twenty-two strengths inside the cover of Jean Fritz's 1976 book about Benjamin Franklin. Roy is clean and sober today and we're still “S.I.T.” – still staying in touch.

---

*We are always more anxious  
to be distinguished for a  
talent that we do not possess,  
than to be praised for  
the fifteen we do possess.*

– Mark Twain



Here are four things you can do to build on what's right with you ...

## 1 **Be Proud**

We have a tendency to downplay our strengths and it's no wonder. Most of us have been taught to pay more attention to fixing our defects than to leveraging what we do well. Not sure about this? Just think back to your last performance review or job appraisal! It is possible to be proud of your unique greatness and be humble at the same time. You've accomplished so much in your life and you should be happy about that. You also have many more things to do – with your strengths in play – and that will give you a reason to feel energized with greater confidence.

## 2 **Share**

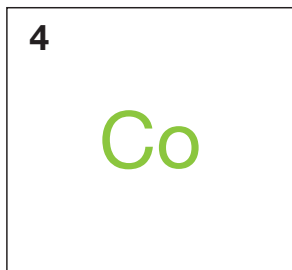
Invite others to join you in conversation about your talents. Ask people you trust how they see your strengths demonstrated on a daily or weekly basis. And share the same with them. Bring new, positive discussions into your family by telling your spouse what value of theirs you admire most. Tuck your children in at night and tell them what you think their greatest virtues are. Engage in a strengths-based conversation with your team and discuss each other's positive traits. Consider how dwelling on what's *right* can enhance the most important relationships in your life.

### 3 **Do What's Right**

Go do something. If you are driven by kindness, generosity and the desire to give back, then consider volunteering. If you find that your creativity is a top talent, connect with friends or family and see how you can help them resolve a challenge using your ingenuity. If you discover that community and being a part of a team are especially important to you, then seek a role or champion a project at work that brings a solution to the table or brings people closer. Remember that while you are aware of your intentions, the world around you only knows you by your actions.

### 4 **Fix What's Wrong**

Take the things you do well and look for ways to use them to minimize your weaknesses. If you love reading and enjoy acquiring new skills but you procrastinate, then go get a book on time management (and finish it). If you are a competitive person but you're shy about calling customers, then put that fiery spirit and desire for winning into rising above that fear. If you're empathic and you care about your employees but you know you don't communicate that empathy very well, care enough about them (and yourself) to get some coaching. Remember that others – not only you – are just as impacted by your weakness as they are your greatness.



## COMMUNICATE

say what's  
real

***Courage is what it takes  
to stand up and speak;  
courage is also what it takes  
to sit down and listen.***

– Winston Churchill

In 2007, I received a call from Judy, the owner of a manufacturing business in Texas. She reached out to our company to discuss the possibility of a team-building workshop for her twenty employees. After listening to her talk about some of the challenges she was facing in her organization, I asked a question. “So what’s *really* going on there, Judy?” She paused for a while and said, “It feels like our company has cancer.”

When I asked Judy what was “really going on,” a light bulb went on for her. She continued, “It occurs to me, David, that we have been so busy that we hardly **talk** anymore [with noted emphasis on the word “talk”]. We have staff meetings and we conduct regular leadership discussions. We exchange hundreds of emails every week, and I’m on the phone with our customers and employees all of the time. It’s relevant information that we’re exchanging day after day, but we’re buried in the day *to day*.”

Judy continued, “I really get the sense from these interactions that there is an undercurrent of negativity and frustration eating away at us. It’s in the tones, it’s even in the silence, and it’s palpable. That’s why I thought an

event to bring our people closer would be a good idea – to get us out of this rut. I can't put my finger on the core problem though, you'd have to experience this vibe for yourself." Within a week, I was on a plane with one of our staffers. We were ready to feel the vibe.

Over the course of two consecutive days, we conducted interviews with every employee in the organization, including Judy. To my surprise, there were some good vibrations in the conversations we had. The company was having a phenomenal year despite poor economic conditions, and people were anticipating bonuses. Employees seemed to like their work. The staff appeared to get along with each other, and according to satisfaction surveys, their customers were happy.

What was also apparent though, was that Judy was right. While they were being forthcoming with us, several comments from the employees indicated that their interoffice communication had become inversely proportional to their sales. While their profits were on a meteoric rise, many employees now seemed to be avoiding crucial conversations. Due to heavy workloads and throttling time pressures, people were venting their

complaints in the form of malignant, break room sound bytes. Some felt micromanaged, but weren't sharing that with their supervisors. Others felt stuck in their positions and unsure about opportunities for advancement. What had been a collaborative sales team working towards a common goal now seemed like a group of "me-first" individuals who were jostling for attention.

After weeks of intense team meetings and individual discussions, we helped the employees confront their dis-ease and learn new ways of communicating with each other.

They drafted what they called "The Constitution" – a contract they all signed that outlined some key principles designed to govern more effective communication. They all committed to making time for important conversations – regardless of how busy they might be. They also promised each other they would each make a list of the things they expected at work, whether that expectation was met or unmet, whether it was spoken or unspoken and who at their office was responsible for addressing each expectation.

What this group of dedicated and ambitious people realized was that none of them were mind readers and that what felt like cancer to Judy was, in fact, a chronic and progressive condition that afflicts many individuals, families, teams and organizations every day – they stopped saying what was really going on.

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Here are four steps *you* can take to ensure that your communication is clear and that your expectations are being addressed . . .

## 1 **Focus**

Expectations have a profound impact on our emotions, our behavior and our performance. Think about the important relationships in your life – at work, at home and with your friends. What do you want from the people around you? What do you expect? How critical is each of these needs? You may want to rank the people and your expectations in either the order of their importance to you or the extent to which they're being met.

## 2 **Reflect**

Consider in which areas, and with whom, your expectations are *met* or *unmet* – and whether they have been *spoken* or *unspoken*. If you feel like an expectation is being met, don't just move on to the next one though, analyze and learn from it.



Take time to review those expectations that are currently fulfilled – it can be a rewarding exercise to consider what you did to help achieve that. When you come to an unmet expectation, first ask yourself if what you want is *realistic*. If it is, next reflect on whether your needs have been 1) communicated and 2) said to the right person. You know if someone's the right person if they have the power, authority, influence, title and/or responsibility to actually do something about what you want.

### 3 **Act**

When you talk to the right people, let them know what is important to you and that you'd like to discuss a plan to get your needs met. Sound selfish? It's really not! Sharing your needs and communicating your wishes, while sometimes uncomfortable and new to many folks, might be the only way others know *exactly* what you want. People aren't mind readers. And as long as you're willing to reciprocate by listening to their expectations, there's no selfishness involved.

Consider what you can do for yourself to fulfill your own expectations as well. Explore opportunities for you to invest in your own growth and development, increase your knowledge, and put more “tools” in your toolbox.

## 4 Adjust

Sometimes, your expectations may need to be modified. When considering the relationships that are important to you today – at work and in your personal life – ask yourself a few questions. Can you live with the situation the way it is? Do you need to reconsider your needs? Where do you need to let go and move on?

*Don't lower your expectations to meet your performance.  
Raise your level of performance to meet your expectations.*

– Ralph Marston



## INTEGRATE

live your  
values

***Life's ups and downs  
provide windows of  
opportunity to determine  
your values and goals.  
Think of using all obstacles  
as stepping stones.***

– Marsha Sinetar

## A few years ago

I made a dramatic shift in the direction my company was headed. We had dedicated our efforts up to that point designing and delivering fifteen different employee training workshops and selling our learning materials online. Even with our success following that business plan, I was always determined to someday consolidate our consulting work into a core body of services that were more in our sweet spot. When we were finally able to do that in 2007, our company went through what's called a "rebranding process" – creating a different logo and a new website to tell our story.

During this transformational process, we, the team at Ascendi, were unexpectedly and dramatically transformed ourselves. My personal renewal took place about a week after we had developed our new tagline – "Rise Above. Grow Beyond." That's when I met two incredible people at a local charity event.

Jackie is a teacher and married to an amazing man named Jon. After meeting both of them, the three of us became close friends.

Jon's story of strength, resilience, and *rising above and growing beyond* one's apparent limitations is one that has changed nearly everything in my life – especially how I now view the obstacles that are placed before me not as barriers, but as stepping stones. To me, there is no greater story to illustrate what it means to live your values every day than Jon's.

Jon has Down Syndrome – a genetic condition affecting one's cognitive abilities and physical growth. Growing up, Jon's speech, intellectual and motor skills were more advanced than most with this disorder, so he was able to spend much of his childhood in regular classes in school. As a teenager though, when kids around him were enjoying friendships and dating, Jon was ignored, shunned and bullied. He grew up in a small town and to the people around him, he was very different. People rarely spoke to him and assumed that he was incapable of understanding anything they had to say, anyway.

For many years Jon lived in a kind of isolation that would completely shrivel the souls of most human beings. He worked hard in school though, was able to get various odd jobs, and hung on until the age of twenty-four when

he had the opportunity to go to college. He met and lived among other people with disabilities there. However, since he looked quite different from most of the other students, he wasn't accepted there either. In spite of not being respectfully included in either the disabled or the "normal" world (as he puts it), Jon remained a kind, funny, and optimistic person. He worked hard and overcame many challenges to become one of only a few people with Down Syndrome ever to graduate from his community college with an associate's degree in business. With his new degree proudly under his arm, Jon tried to find work. After two years of being turned down at every interview and becoming completely broke, Jon found a job in construction. Eventually he started his own handyman business where he used his knack for fixing things to help others in need.

Jon became quite popular with elderly people and single moms who are often taken advantage of by contractors. His fees were more reasonable and he was an honest, hard worker. And, as a way of developing social relationships, Jon added another accomplishment – becoming such a great piano player that he was asked to perform in front of audiences around the country.

Eventually, through music, he met Jackie. They married and Jon started a small plumbing business where he could use his skills to do even more good. He has earned the respect and gratitude of his customers and the admiration of all those who get to know him.

Every day is still uphill for Jon, as he continues to battle people's ignorance about his disability and can't get as much business working on houses as his competition. Yet, he remains relentlessly driven by his core values of courage, forgiveness, and optimism – constantly thinking up new ways he can be of service. He doesn't give up. Jon keeps on going with faith that, somehow, someday, it's all going to work out.

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Here is a quick exercise  
to help you identify  
*your* core values and  
put them into action ...

**1 Write out your top five core values.**

These are absolute; they're your "non-negotiables."

**2 Prioritize them on the list,** with #1 being your core guiding principle.

**3 Then, list five of the most significant activities you can perform** to honor your values and bring them to life.

**Now ... *go do them!***





## RELATE

make meaningful  
connections

***We humans are social beings.  
For this reason it is hardly  
surprising that most of our  
happiness arises in the context  
of our relationships with others.***

– Dalai Lama

# Anyone in sales

knows that the key to creating loyalty is establishing a relationship of trust with your customer. If you've been in a sales position, you know that every opportunity to interact with the customer is golden. Whether on the phone, in person or even in email, the only truly sustainable competitive advantage today is the development of meaningful connections with the people who want your product or service. Even if you've never actually worked in sales as a profession, I've learned that we all have something to "sell" – no matter what we do for a living. And we have more routes of communication to spread our message and make our "pitches" than ever before.

With all of the tweeting, flickering, linking, pinging, poking, buzzing and yelping going on around us and amongst us though, are we truly sharing anything of real value with people? We have "friends" and "connections," but do we have deeper friendships and more *meaningful* connections? Are we fully leveraging our connectedness and relating to people not just more, but *better*?

Not long ago, I met a guy named Marty. We were delivering sales training at the company where he worked and throughout the two-day event, Marty asked some great questions. He always seemed to have something relevant and positive to contribute to our discussions. I also noticed that in his breakout groups – and while mingling with his coworkers during our breaks – he was never without a smile and always managed to make people laugh. Marty was sharp, funny, well-respected, and genuinely seemed like a nice person. He'd obviously mastered the art of saying what's real and it was easy for me to see why he was his company's top account executive.

At one of our breaks, I asked Marty if I could call him after the event was over and spend some time learning more about his methods. I wasn't interested so much in his sales techniques as I was captivated by the seemingly effortless way he not only interacted with people, but how he really *connected* with them. He agreed to call me and a few weeks later we talked by phone in the first of what would be many powerful conversations.

I began that first call by sharing some of my observations of his behavior at our training event. When I made the comment that he seemed to have quite an impact on everyone he met, he simply laughed and said, “Yeah, I get that a lot.” “Do you hear that from customers too?” I asked. “Yes, but I also have friends, my wife, people at my church, even my kids telling me that I’m easy to relate to and that I’m a good listener. The fact is, David, I don’t sell anything in my job. I get to know people and what they want and need from me. I listen and I care – regardless if it’s a \$250,000 customer or the person bagging my groceries at the store.

“I believe that everyone I meet has a message for me so I tune in to everything. When I do that and it happens to create a bond with someone who buys a ton of stuff from me, great. But that’s not why I do it. And when I connect with people like my wife and my kids, that’s the greatest bonus I could ever earn.”

Wow! Marty and I went on to talk for about ninety minutes that time and many more hours since, as we still coach him and his colleagues on a weekly basis. What he learned from me (that’s important to Marty – to share his

takeaways from almost every conversation) was just how special his gift of connecting with people really is. I shared some ideas about how he might pass this gift on to some of his peers. But the reward I got from Marty seemed to be so much more valuable. I learned that Marty, with no formal training or coaching around it, uses every single key principle of successful sales, but not for the purpose of becoming a better account executive. As he puts it, “I do what I do to become a better human being.”

He sees opportunity in every interaction – especially in difficult relationships and when dealing with the most frustrating of people. He just repeats to himself that often-quoted axiom that’s always fresh and relevant to him:

*There’s gotta be a pony in here, somewhere!*

He communicates directly to people, never breaks eye contact, knows how to reinforce his message with the right body language, and he’s sparing with his words. “Once you sell something, David, don’t buy it back,” he once told me. He lives his life looking for ways to create

positive memories for himself and for the people around him. And get this: he's a member of exactly ZERO online social networking communities and he doesn't text anyone ... ever.

Marty once shared with me about the two weeks he spent cleaning up his basement with his son. They'd had a bad leak in his house and a foot of water everywhere. "Geez, that sounds like a lot of work and a really stressful situation to deal with," I said – stating the obvious. "Making memories, man ... making memories," he replied. "I wish we'd had a flood in my house growing up," he continued; "I mighta' spent more time getting to know *my* dad. He fixed things around our house all the time;" Marty said thoughtfully; "he just spent too much time looking for the next distraction – and *wasted* too much time fixing all the wrong stuff.

"Who cares if the bird feeder's crooked? I swear, David, I think he just kept knocking that thing over so he'd feel like he was doing something important." After Marty shared this valuable insight, he wrapped up one of our talks with a statement that I reflect on often, especially

when I'm spending time with my children: "When it comes to relating to everyone in my life, Dave, I just remember what my dad did with us growing up. Then I do the opposite."

Whatever the motivation, Marty manages to accomplish every day what so many people I meet want desperately to achieve. He makes meaningful connections and he sells positive memories. As for me, I'm sold!

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Here's something of substance to consider as *you* relate with your friends, family and customers ...

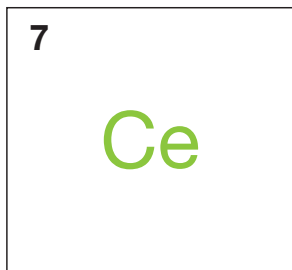
## 1 **Be an Enzyme**

In chemistry, a catalyst is a substance that speeds up a reaction without itself being a part of the reaction. An enzyme, on the other hand, not only speeds up a reaction but is also transformed in the process. The pages of history illustrate great men and women who chose to live their life as enzymes. One such individual is the 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Faced at age 39 with a crippling disease, he didn't let his illness derail a successful political career. Roosevelt not only made significant contributions on local and world stages, he also invested time and energy as one of the founders of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis – today known as The March of Dimes. An enzyme, Roosevelt transformed himself into a better leader as he invested more of himself into his life's work.

The question for each of us:

***Where and how can I become more of an enzyme in my connections with others?***





CELEBRATE  
remember  
your victories

***The miracle of your  
existence calls for  
celebration every day.***

– Oprah Winfrey

In early 2010, I was introduced to a courageous woman named Karen.

I was hired by her employer to conduct six months of coaching with her shortly after she had taken on a new leadership role at a large health insurance company.

Midway through one of our early sessions, Karen began talking about the enormous challenges she was facing in this new position. She was feeling overwhelmed by the pressures of having to travel more often, get a team of twelve employees re-engaged with their jobs (after some lackluster leadership preceded her) and by the difficult task of having to constantly manage multiple internal and external customer needs simultaneously.

As I soon learned, the work pressures Karen was facing were being exacerbated by her struggles at home. She had a seven-year-old son Jake with autism, and while excited about this new opportunity at work, she was also trying to balance the intense demands of the position with her important family priorities.

Karen told me about how emotionally and physically taxing it was to practice the necessary behavioral therapies with Jake, to work on what social and speech exercises she could perform with him, and, along with her husband and other family members, get Jake to all of his appointments – usually four or five per week. In one meeting, talking about the painfully arduous process of teaching Jake how to say “Mommy” and “Daddy,” Karen remarked to me, “Honestly, David, I look for even the tiniest victory I can achieve with him every day. Because if I don’t remember those little moments of joy, where we do *something* better than we were able to accomplish before, I would just fall apart.” “How do you celebrate those tiny moments?” I asked. “Celebrate them?” she quickly responded, “I don’t have time to celebrate!”

In our next meeting together, I offered an idea to Karen. I asked her to consider keeping a Victory Journal for a while. I suggested that she go to a local office supply store, purchase a small notebook and carry it around at home.

I asked that anytime she achieved one of those tiny but crucial wins with Jake over the next fourteen days, that she write it down in her pocket-sized journal and consider sharing her entries with me in our next session a couple weeks later. She agreed.

Karen came in to that next session beaming. She sat down in my office and took four mini composition books out of her purse with a huge smile on her face. “One journal wasn’t enough,” she said proudly. “I started writing the night of our last session. Here, take a look,” and she handed me the little red book.

On the cover she had neatly printed “VJ” in black marker. I opened it to a random page and read:

***I’m not alone in this!***

Right below that:

***Jake is sleeping. I love watching him sleep.  
It’s the only time he seems at peace.***

On the next page:

***Breakfast – Jake didn’t smell his pancake  
for too long. Ate it pretty quickly!***

“Wow,” I smiled back. “What was this like for you?”

“Incredible,” Karen replied. “I often write in a journal anyway so this wasn’t new to me. But the idea to keep it with me, to write down even the smallest things that happened with Jake and focus on what was good...it helped. In looking through my other journals, I see that most of what I usually write is pretty depressing, actually.”

After we processed her victories at home, I told Karen that our last session had a profound impact on me as well. I said that I couldn’t help but think that documenting even her smallest successes might be something to consider at work. “Would you be willing to keep a Victory Journal at the office?” I asked. “Sure. But I bet I won’t use up four of them,” she said, rolling her eyes.

Karen was right. She didn’t need four little notebooks; she ended up using eight of them in two weeks.

Turns out she had to go back to the store and buy the notebooks in bulk!

In Karen's entries she wrote down simple wins that made a big difference. She wrote a clear email, she had a positive conversation with an employee, she ran a productive meeting, she left the office before six o'clock. When we discussed how this exercise was helpful for her, Karen became aware that: 1) there were many things to be proud of in her day that she had previously dismissed as "routine" or "what was expected," 2) the act of writing things down with a pen, not on a computer (a lost art to Karen and to many of us) helped her connect emotionally to the victories, and 3) celebrating her accomplishments at the end of the day – even with a simple acknowledgement that they had occurred – helped to replace her frustration and anxiety with pride and joy.

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Here are two things to  
think about as you  
embrace the tiny victories  
revealed to *you* every day ...

## 1 **Sing Your Song**

When a woman in a certain African tribe discovers that she is pregnant, she will go out into the wilderness with friends, connect with nature, and create a song for the unborn child. As the child develops in the mother's womb, she will often sing the song to her baby. When the child is born, friends and family members greet the baby into the world by singing that song. At every birthday celebration, the boy or girl hears their song. During their wedding and at important moments in life, the song is sung. Finally, when the individual departs this world, friends and family gather again to sing that same song that brought them into this world ... the same song that the young mother tenderly created for her child. When people in this tribe experience life's inevitable challenges, they don't reach for drugs, alcohol or weapons. Instead, *they sing their song*. They reconnect with what's most important.

What is *your* song?

## 2 Be Thankful

At its deepest level, to celebrate means to give thanks. The foundation for a celebration is a profound mood of gratefulness. As we celebrate a child's birthday, a coworker's promotion or our team winning a lucrative contract, we invoke the celebratory mood by giving thanks. We are thankful for the year that went by for that child, for the recognition of our coworker's achievements, and for the measure of trust that our team has earned from our customer. If we didn't feel thankful for *something*, we would just be going through the celebratory motions and it wouldn't be meaningful. Think about this: when a company celebrates an important accomplishment, how often do its leaders make it crystal clear to the entire organization what they're thankful for? The catering, the decorations, the banners and the music, by themselves, won't do it. But a sincere, heartfelt invocation of thanks can make the event memorable.





ILLUMINATE

help others  
win

***We're here for a reason.  
I believe a bit of the reason  
is to throw little torches  
out to lead people through  
the dark.***

– Whoopi Goldberg

Recently, I went online to find out just what I could buy for *exactly* \$6.73. I found out that one can acquire any number of cool and interesting items: a rubber bathtub mat, a three-watt flashlight, a sweetheart flower throw pillow or a replacement blade for a planer saw. You can even get a brand-spanking new fish poacher – with a rack, no less – or an unsigned photo of Wild Bill Hickok. It turns out that you can get all sorts of neat things with fewer than seven dollars and a pretty wild imagination. One early fall morning a few years ago, I discovered something else you can do with \$6.73. You can change somebody's life.

It was a Wednesday, and in our office Wednesdays have been officially renamed “Wellnessday.” We observe Wellnessday in any number of cool and interesting ways at Ascendi. Sometimes we take our lunch hour together and walk on a fitness trail nearby. On other occasions over the years, I've asked experts to come in and talk with us about yoga, meditation, and good nutrition. This particular day, I decided to stop at a local donut shop on the way in and get some (decidedly non-nutritious) treats for the team. It was my turn.

I walked in and stood in a line about five people deep. While making my way to the goodies, I heard a few of the customers in front of me mumbling about how long one of the patrons was taking at the register. “What is her problem?” one of them said while clenching his teeth. As I approached the counter to place my order, I noticed that the woman who had been holding things up was at the register next to me. “Do you have another credit card or something? This one doesn’t work either,” the lip-pierced employee said in an impatient tone. Just then, the woman’s purse fell off of the counter, spilling all of its contents on the floor. As I knelt down to help her pick up some loose change, I looked at her face and said, “Here, let me help you.” That’s when I saw the tears streaming down her cheeks. “Thank you. I’m so sorry,” she choked. “No, no. It’s no problem,” I said. “Are you okay?”

She stopped furiously picking up papers and pennies and put her head in her hands and just bawled. Instinctively, I put my hand on her shoulder as we stood up and she put her purse back on the counter. Then she looked at me and said, “This is the worst day of my life,” and the tears just kept coming. Not sure what to do – standing in line at a very public place full of agitated people – I looked at

the girl behind the counter and said, “How can I help?”  
“Please, no. That’s okay,” the customer said and then told the cashier to put everything back.

“How much is it?” I asked, as I strained my head to see the amount on the register. “Six dollars and seventy three cents,” the cashier said. “No, please. I can’t let you do that,” the woman pleaded. Then I noticed someone walk up next to her and ask what was wrong just as I was quickly passing the employee a \$10 bill. “Mommy, we have to go. I’m going to be late,” a young girl’s voice said. “Did you get me the maple-frosted one?” Before she could say anything, I handed the woman the bag and looked at the little girl. “Here you go, ma’am. You almost forgot your breakfast,” I said with a smile.

The woman just stood there, with her daughter of about seven tugging at her sleeve, and wiped her eyes to look at me. “I appreciate your kindness, sir.” “I hope things get better for you,” I said. “Try and have a nice day, okay?” As I walked out a few minutes later, I saw the woman and child in their car. She glanced at me as she slowly pulled away and put her hand on her window, mouthing the words “thank you” as they drove off.

I could probably stop here and you'd get the message about helping others, but there's more to the story.

A couple of months after this happened – it was Christmastime – I dropped in to the same donut shop with my ten-year-old son Kevin on a Sunday morning. I hadn't been in there since that Wednesday in October because of what stuck with me most from that experience. It was not what I had done, but how rotten others had behaved – including one of the store employees – toward someone who was obviously in distress. But alas, Kevin likes the maple-frosted ones too, so there we were.

We were walking out after getting our donuts when a voice yelled from inside, "Wait, sir! Hold on a second!" As we turned back, there was a girl behind the counter waving something in her hand. "Sir, I have to give you this!" she screamed, freaking my son out a little bit and making me check my pockets for what I might have left behind. Then I noticed it was her – the exasperated employee from months earlier. I couldn't believe it. She came through a swinging door at the end of the counter and said, "I've looked for you every morning. Remember that lady whose breakfast you bought a while back?"

She comes in here all the time. She left this for you a few weeks ago.”

The girl handed me an envelope that was taped shut. “Just so you know,” the girl said, “we all read this after she dropped it off. I hope you don’t mind. Looks like you really helped her out.” “Okay ... well thank you,” I replied, and Kevin and I went to the car. “What was that all about?” Kevin asked. “I’ll tell you in a second, buddy. Let me look at this first.” I lifted the tape on the back, opened the envelope and started reading.

It was a two-page letter. In it, the tearful woman who by 7:30 one Wednesday morning was already having the worst day of her life, told me the story of that fateful day. She had awakened to find her husband gone and a note left behind on the counter. He left her and their daughter for another woman. He had drained their bank accounts and reported their credit cards stolen. In the last paragraph of the letter she thanked me. She thanked me for being an example to her daughter of what “a good man” does. She thanked me for giving her “help and hope” at a time when she “had never needed it more.” She finished the letter with these final words:

*I was going to give you the money back  
with this note but instead I'm going to wait  
for the right time and I'm going to do  
what you did. I will help someone else the  
way that you helped us.*

I left the donut shop that crisp December Sunday with  
tears in my eyes, holding my son's hand and whispering  
the words "thank you" as I pulled away.

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Searching for ways *you* can change a life and help someone win? You won't have to look very hard. Find someone you trust and grab a candle ...

### 1 **Become Ignorant**

Imagine a pie chart that represents everything in this universe that is knowable. A tiny sliver of that is what you know right now. A slightly bigger sliver is what you know that you don't know. For example, you may not know about heart surgery, but you could eventually know it through years of study and practice. Now, stay with me on this. The remainder of the pie chart, then, is what you don't know that you don't know. What you know that you don't know we may call "ignorance." But what you don't know that you don't know is your "blindness." Oftentimes, the task of the wise leader and coach is to take a willing student from blindness to ignorance – to reveal to them what they don't know that they don't know. This is rich and fertile territory that leads to quantum leaps in individual development. Who do you trust enough to illuminate your blind spots?



## 2 Shine Your Light Brightly

James Keller once said, “A candle loses none of its light by lighting another candle.” If this resonates with you, then a good way to create a positive impact in the world is to become the brightest light that you can possibly be and to reach as many willing students as you can. We brighten our light through education, self-care and service.

What, then, gets in the way of our light? One of these negative elements is being too quick to judge others. Interestingly, our judgments say more about who we are than about those we’re judging. The way out of this dilemma is to take responsibility for our judgments ... to literally open our eyes to how we’re showing up at each moment. As our individual light shines brighter and as we ignite those around us, our lives begin to glow with possibilities!

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

## **Who are you and what do you want?**

I once misdialed a phone number and heard these two powerful questions on a stranger's voice mail greeting. I don't know if the person I mistakenly called that day was filled with indignation or incredible awareness. Those are powerful questions though, aren't they? They are universal queries about our core values and our purpose – riddles that most of us spend our lives trying to solve. While the answers are not easy for most of us to come by, the ways we can discover them are pretty simple, actually.

In the preceding pages you've learned that who you are is determined most by what you do. Not just the tasks you perform at work or the responsibilities you have at home; it's about connecting the actions you take to the principles that are most important in your life. If you believe that you are someone who matters, then decide every day to DO what matters.

Identify your grand ambitions. Start everything you do every day – at work and with your family and friends – with passion and positive energy. Focus on what’s right about you and don’t dwell on your limitations. Share your expectations with those around you – avoiding unhealthy communication patterns. Bring your whole self into the actions you perform everyday, practicing the principles that drive you at every turn.

Recognize your interactions with people as opportunities to connect with other human beings and learn from your relationships – even the most challenging ones. Spend less time investing your emotions into where you fall short and more time into the victories you’ve accomplished – even the tiniest ones. And as you do all of these things, be ever mindful of how and with whom you can pass your life’s lessons along and help someone else achieve their greatness. Here’s to you ...

Live **the 8**. Do what matters.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David".

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## The Author



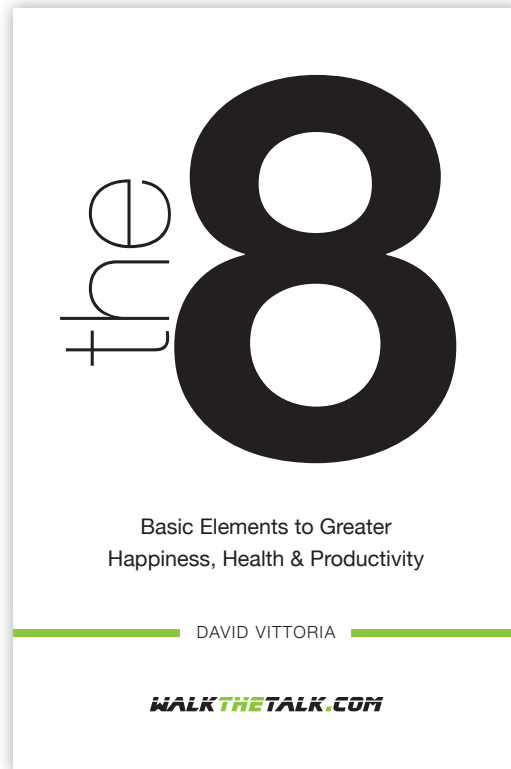
**David Vittoria** is the Founder & Chief Inspiration Officer at Ascendi, a specialized consulting firm focused on team development and organizational health. David is an accomplished executive coach and sought-after speaker on a wide range of topics impacting individuals and the workplace.

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