As someone with lots of entrepreneurial DNA in my blood, what gets me excited are the opportunities that rise to their potential with lots of upside. We are working on a project right now that has lots of potential, and I feel situations like this help to bring a team together to work on something that could have an upside beyond existing expectations.

Near the end of last year, a couple of guys came to me and wanted to talk to Efficience about an idea they had to build a mobile app. They wanted to provide a cool way to look at what people are doing out there and share their thoughts. After some discussion, they proposed that we build the app for equity in the company. This is a tough thing to do, because if you build something and don’t get paid, you had better make sure that you have enough income from other projects to keep paying the bills or you will soon be out of business.

We had experienced investing our resources in a few different projects and getting them out there. However, seeing them not being accepted in the marketplace, in any way, was frustrating. Lots of our profitability was eaten up in R&D around the next idea – hoping for something to go viral and make the big bucks. But it didn’t! Why should we try again? Well, 1. Because you can’t help yourself when it is in your blood and 2. Because if you don’t keep trying, you will never provide the opportunity to truly succeed.

Over time, I have been made aware of how chasing these opportunities can get you into trouble and open you up to the
“dark side” of entrepreneurism, as was described by Steve Wynn at the 2007 E0 20th Anniversary Celebration in Las Vegas. He said that the need to seek out opportunities that may push you to put it all on the line for the next big thing is addictive and scary, but it gets the blood moving for those of us with the itch. Wynn did this when he started his casino. He put it all on the line and almost lost it all.

You may recall a blog I wrote on how entrepreneurs suffer from overconfident optimism — another area that can create blinders to the reality of your situation and get you in trouble. There are a couple of ways to deal with that, as I discussed in the blog, and they are doing a premortem and firing bullets that Jim Collins reveres to in his book, Great by Choice. The approach that we have taken is to fire a bullet and not bet everything on one idea or situation.

Having our business flow with processes that work on getting projects done and getting business in the door has to be done first. Then we can test out ideas that could be big, as in fire bullets but not bet the farm on one idea that will risk everything.

So my main point is that those of us that get caught up in the entrepreneur euphoria, just be aware of the “dark side” and the over-confident optimism that seems to follow, and take steps to rein it in before it gets us into trouble.

Think It Into Reality
So you have had a hard day and you have lots of things coming at you – work, deadlines, bosses, personnel issues, organizing a family – and you feel overwhelmed with it all. Your brain is about to explode. Feel like this often? I do at times. How does it make you feel to know that, according to famous Harvard professor and psychologist William James, the average person uses only 10 percent of his mental power? Wouldn’t it be nice to use more?

How can we use more of our brain to not feel so overwhelmed, and more importantly to become the highest version of ourselves that we are seeking to become? An author that had a huge impact on me was Napoleon Hill, from the legendary book Think and Grow Rich. This book instills that your mindset and beliefs are what control your life. From all the research that Napoleon did with the wealthiest of men back in the early part of the 20th century, he realized that what you think about is what you are.

So let’s think about that. What are the dominating thoughts that are in your mind? Do you find yourself thinking and saying things like, “That is only for rich folks.” or “I will never earn enough money to buy a house like that.” or “He is filthy rich!” So what is so filthy about having money? Bill Gates and Warren Buffet don’t look so dirty, and on top of that, they are out creating jobs and bettering the world with all the great things they are doing with their money. If we think money is bad, dirty or evil, how are we going to attract it to us in the quantities that we really desire?

I found that early in my career, I had negative thoughts – like I wasn’t good enough to have lots of money or that it wasn’t possible. It was books like Napoleon’s and others I read that helped me set in place the right mind set to believe that I could have success and the money that I desired. You do
this by creating positive statements about your success and wealth and stating them as if they are happening right now.

The subconscious will believe what you think about and set you in motion to get what you are after. This doesn’t mean that you can’t go backward once you have success or accumulated some wealth. Then, you have look at what you have been thinking about and determine whether your thinking is pushing you forward or holding you back.

I was reminded of how I was holding myself back, and how I still might at times, by reading *Five Things You Need to Succeed According to Napoleon Hill*. I know I let things get in my head that I don’t want there, and so I go back and read and implement things that are discussed in *Think and Grow Rich* and another great book like the *The Answer*.

Do you feel like you are getting all you can out of your brain or are you holding yourself back with negative thoughts? Change your belief and change your life, as many great ones have said.

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**Are We All Salespeople?**
Over the past few months, I have been contemplating and researching speakers that would be a good fit for the EO Argentina University in November in Buenos Aires. Our theme for the university is “Tango with the Unexpected.” As co-chair of learning, I am working to bring in people that will meet EO expectations, which are very high, and relate with our theme. One speaker I would like to bring in is Daniel Pink. However, given he is in such high demand, I am not sure we can fit into his schedule or he can fit into our budget.

Pink has written five books. I have read three of them and working on the fourth now, which is his current one: To Sell is Human: The Surprising Truth about Moving Others. Pink’s work is always out on the edge and really takes a look at ideas, ways of life and thinking, digging deeper to find new meaning or a different perspective. He did that with his book Free Agent Nation, which I read in the early 2000s, and with Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Nations. Then, he really hit a nerve with people when he came out with Drive: The Surprising Truth about what Motivates People. This work changed a lot of people’s minds. I did a blog on it, discussing how we should motivate others and had several findings that were unexpected.

I will provide a sneak peek into what Pink has done with To Sell is Human, because it holds a surprising twist on how we see people that sell, suggesting that every one of us is selling in just about everything we do. When Pink sat down and took an in-depth look at what he had done over a two-week period, he realized that within the conversations — emails, texts, calls, and meetings — he was trying to get people to part with resources.
Most don’t like hearing that they are sales people. Selling can be perceived as trickery and deceit. But as Pink describes, things have changed and that is not the world we can play in – not if we want to succeed in selling. Pink creates a discussion around how sales has changed more over the last 10 years than over the previous 100. Further, our assumptions about it have changed. We still have about 1 in 9 people engaged in sales today, and the other 8 of 9 are indirectly involved in sales. Pink says, “We’re persuading, convincing and influencing others to give up something they’ve got in exchange for what we’ve got. “

An interesting point that he brings up in the book is that as business owners, we are supposed to send our sales people out to solve problems. What Pink discovers is that it is more about going out and helping people to find their problems. That is different, isn’t it? He discusses that an effective way to move others is to uncover their challenges. For sales to have meaning, he gets into discussing that it needs to be made personnel and purposeful.

Is your approach to sales working for you currently? I will have to say that is has been a struggle for us. If it is the same for you, maybe a radical way of changing our thinking around sales is what is needed to make them better. Check out this short interview that Pink gave on his key discoveries for the book.

Video Link: [http://vimeo.com/61559527](http://vimeo.com/61559527)
It’s a Give and Ask Business World

I have written a few blogs from David Meerman Scott’s books and blogs because they relate so much to the social media world we are in today. Scott’s work is all about creating a worldwide rave around what you offer, by putting valuable content out on the web that will build credibility and create value for others. He also discusses using current events to leverage more interest and exposure around what you offer the world.

Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking

So I will ask you, are you giving away content on the web that is valuable to others – especially your clients – that attracts them to you? That is the focus of a recent blog that Scott wrote that was based on a TED talk titled “Amanda Palmer: The Art of Asking.” In this very interesting TED talk, she discusses her experience of going from a bridal statue and giving out flowers for money, to an alternative rock singer giving her music away for free.

From the experience of learning to ask for money on the streets, she gains an awareness of a connection with people that, to her, was profound. This connection, she realized, overflowed to how she blogged and related to her crowd in that they just gave her money. She then peeled away from her label and did a crowd-funding approach. She hoped to raise $100k, and instead, she raised $1.2 million. She realized that people just want to help when you build a connection and just trust
them.

So from a marketing approach, what David recommends is that you give your value content – like blogs videos, infographics and full-length ebooks. He says give your best stuff away for free, and build the relationship that comes with being vulnerable.

Next, do as Amanda does and ask them to help you. She says, “Give and receive fearlessly. Ask without shame.” Then, just like the video discusses, David asks if you need a speaker at your next conference.

What are you giving away and asking for help from those whom you provide value?

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**Are You Confronting the Brutal Facts?**

We have had a nice run in the markets over the past few weeks, hitting record highs for seven consecutive days. It would seem like good times ahead and I would so much like to jump on that bandwagon. I have seen this before and it makes me very cautious, given what is probably ahead. With any market and economic difficulties, there is always opportunity. The key signature of the DNA in a real entrepreneur is always being in search of opportunities in any
environment, and then acting on them.

When looking for opportunities, we must first practice the Stockdale Paradox, which is coined by Jim Collins in his book *Good to Great*. In the book, Admiral Jim Stockdale makes observations of those that survived being prisoners of war in Vietnam and those that did not. Admiral Stockdale was there for eight years and endured the most brutal of situations.

When asked “Who did not make it out?” Stockdale replied, “The optimist.” He shared that they would say, we will be out by Christmas, Easter, and Thanksgiving, and when those markers came and went, the POWs would die of broken hearts.

He went on to say to Jim “This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever it may be.”

So what are the brutal facts of our reality? We have a huge amount of debt ($16 trillion) that is as much as the combined total of all the goods and services transacted in one year for the US economy. Each year the bureaucrats are spending $1 trillion more than they take in from taxes, so we are adding a trillion to the total debt each year. The worst part is they don’t show any desire to stop spending! We have major uncertainties of how all the tax increases, more government controls, and medical health care changes will affect our businesses.

The fear and uncertainty makes people sit and wait it out, for the most part. We are experiencing some positives now because of pent-up demand. Some areas don’t have enough new homes to account for the demand. Some businesses are spending on things that they have been putting off for a long time and can’t wait any longer.

This is not the environment of record-breaking stock markets
that means things will change. I was in the investment world when the Fed flooded the markets during the late 90s and worried about lots of things, but mainly Y2K. This money mostly went into stocks and drove the markets to a massive bubble that soon burst. Sadly, I watched my money and that of so many others lose unfathomable sums.

Because of the brutal facts and my experience, I am being careful about the markets and business investments. I am also keeping an eye on any opportunities that may arise, given major changes that may occur. Remember that companies like General Electric, IBM, Disney, Burger King, Microsoft and Apple, all were founded in major recession or great depression. Opportunities are not limited to the good times.

Follow the Big Trends or the Small Ones?

I have talked to a lot of people about the big trend of mobile, the growth in this area, how it is changing the way we do business, and how if we don’t want to be left behind, we need to adapt. Some of this has a longer time horizon and some of it needs to be thought about in the short-term. The point is that this is a Macro trend that is happening and one that may be less of a concern than building your small tribe of followers that make a difference to the revenue and profits of your company.

Seth Godin’s blog on Macro Trends Don’t’ Matter so Much, makes
a point that I agree with for the more focused, short-term aspects that drive your business. He says that the Macro trends, like internet subscribers some year in the future, or the number of Spanish speakers as a percent of world population, are not the key drivers to your growth and the group you are after. We could add things like, Who will have more in Apple’s IOS or Android’s platforms by 2020? What percent of the world total output will China make up in the next 20 years?

These trends are nice to watch, and some of you may want to think about it more than others. However, the key is that most companies and organizations need dozens, hundreds, or thousands to make a difference in their world. They don’t need access to all Spanish speakers, to all internet subscribers, or all those on Apple’s platform. What they need is the ability to spread the word among a tribe of followers that are like-minded and passionate about your unique “purple cow” offering.

This is where you what to really drill down into who your client is and what it is he wants. Robert Bloom, in his amazing book “The Inside Advantage,” gives us a step-by-step process for drilling down to the true look and feel of who your client is and what is unique about what you are offering him. Knowing your customers in this way will allow the laser-like focus to zero in on your tribe.

Finishing up in Seth’s blog, he says that the big trends are a numbers game, and that by realizing that, you are “treating the market as an amorphous mass of interchangeable parts.” You realize the micro is more important than the macro and that it is about the people – that we are individual human beings and we have names, desires, wants and interest.

What is your micro group that you are focused on?
Adding Context to Your Decisions

When we look at the world, a lot of times we miss the aspect of context on how we look at things. This has importance in making business decisions of
all sizes and shapes. This can show up a lot with people’s decisions and with how they look at their competitors and strategies.

I was reminded of this on reading Rasmus Arkersen’s recent post of the power of contextual intelligence. I have written about Rasmus before and his work continues to intrigue me. I first met him when he spoke at an EO regional conference in Bangalore, India, a few years ago. I wrote a blog about his work on human potential.

This recent discussion was on how Rasmus asked people which would be better to hire – an Apple or Microsoft sales person. He experienced most people would say Apple, because of all the hype on the products and Steve Jobs. But what if it was all that hype that made it easy for the Apple guy to sell more when the level of sales was not as high as Microsoft, but was due to a much better sales ability? This is the contextual intelligence that Rasmus is talking about when he says to look deeper and below the surface to learn how the numbers are achieved.

Anthony Robbins also talks about this in his discussions around metaprograms. He states that by understanding how people sort things, you can communicate better with them in the right context. According to Robbins, some people sort primarily by feelings or logical thoughts. Most of us know that, but did you know that some people can even sort by food? When their thoughts are focused around food, you may ask them directions, only for them to tell you to go down to the McDonald’s and turn there. Robbins says, “If you ask them about the movies, they will talk about the concessions stand. If you ask them about the wedding, they will discuss the cake.”

I also experienced this in my Investment days in what is called “survivorship bias.” This occurs when you look at performance over, let’s say, a group of mutual funds during an
imaginable 20 years, and it looks good at an 8% return. What it doesn’t factor in are the funds that performed badly and were closed down or merged out of existence. If you added this in over that time period, you may have a percent or two lower rate of all those funds.

These all are examples of looking at the full context of a situation and getting a complete understanding of why something is what it is. This is what Rasmus says is contextual intelligence, and when all is fully factored, may help you make better decisions.

What type of decisions do you have ahead that may need a little contextual intelligence?

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**Partnering for Growth**

A few weeks back, I shared what we are doing to move forward on the path of concentration around a certain focus with mobile. We have built a mobile app platform that is customizable and appropriate for our focus of working with marketing companies. This has been an evolution for us, and one that recently has had a lot of the details come together.

As I shared before, mobile is growing and the smart phone is being adopted with exponential growth. It has provided opportunity for businesses to connect with their customers that has not been possible before. With the build-out of an app, you can have relationships with your customers or employees that is right in the palm of their hands. The convenient access to knowledge, specials, promotions, events, sales and customer data is significant.
I am in Charlotte for a few days to meet with marketing companies and build relationships that will benefit each of us. We will discuss our approach and platform to make their lives easier, shorten the time to production, and create more profit opportunities. With each of us focusing on what we do best, there are lots of positive aspects to this type of partnership. We focus on building and incorporating the design, and the marketing companies focus on their strengths of design and creativity.

This gets us back to the area of focusing around a certain vertical and making the business process one that is scalable. This approach allows the process to be repetitive and efficient. When you produce different custom software projects, like we have in the past, they require a lot of effort to ramp up and go through a learning curve. But when you do, there is no long-term benefit for that extra effort. This focus will allow us to get a benefit from the learning curve of building the platform and using it again and again. I am excited about this change in direction and having a certain type of client to focus on – a client with the need to fill a gap that is present when their own clients tell them they want to have a mobile app for their businesses. This will allow us to say “no,” when we are approached to do things that will take us down a path of lost investment and cost, instead of being profitable.

How are you staying focused, scaling and saying “no” to the things you shouldn’t be doing?
The Goal Is Antifragile

Some of you may remember the book, “The Black Swan,” that I have written quite a few blogs on in the past. The reason I have shared from Nassim Taleb often is his philosophical thinking about the world and investing is so insightful and unique that it makes for serious contemplation about the world in which we live.

Well, Taleb has done it again. He has written a new book that is just starting to sink in and open my eyes to the implications of his thinking. The book is “Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder.” Here Taleb presents to us that things will get more stable and stronger when they have ongoing shock and turmoil, compared to things that are breakable or fragile. That the antifragility of some comes at the expense of the fragility of others.

This happens in the biological world where some parts of the inside, like within a cell, may need to be fragile for the large structure to be antifragile. Taleb uses the example of restaurants in the book, saying that each one is fragile in that they come and go – they compete and go out of business regularly. The local restaurant collective is antifragile with its system providing quality, whereas central control, Soviet-
style cafeteria food would be the alternative.

Fragile type systems depend on everything be exact and a planned course. If you have deviations, they are more harmful, so this needs to be more predictive in its approach. The opposite holds true for antifragile, where you don’t worry about deviations and the possible different outcomes that may occur as you move forward.

When you see the world through this lens, it helps put perspective on what works and doesn’t work. This would mean not bailing out on the things that don’t work, and not relying on permanent administrations and forecasting departments that think they can predict the future.

How do you help yourself to become more antifragile? You learn to love mistakes. When you make them a lot, but at a level that is small and reversible instead of large and destructive, you put yourself in a situation to evolve and stay alive. What you may consider is the random aspect of trial and error, is not so random if it is carried out in a rational approach, because the error is used as information.

For the entrepreneur out there, Taleb’s work has a lot of implications for your strategy and thinking in how you approach your competitors, market place and the world in which you live. I will get into that more in future blogs.

As I’m sure you have noticed, we have changed the blog over to a new format, so it will look a little different to you. Thanks for reading.
Riding The Wheel Of Life

As I come back from an EO Insignia and Quantum Leap conference in Park City, Utah, I carry with me some great experiences. This conference brings all the segregated forums together to have time to interact with each other and gain a personalized approach to the EO experience. Insignia is for people with 7 years or more in EO, and Quantum Leap is for those with $15-million or more in revenue. We get time with the large group as well as with our own forum, which includes a coach to take us through exercises.

Our coach, Phil Kristianson, incorporated some adjustments and tools worth sharing. One, the Wheel of Life, allows you to look at the key areas of your life and rate them by how satisfied you are with that area. These include family, significant other, health, career, finances, relationships, spirituality, and adventure or fun. See the form here and print it out and try it for yourself.

When you fill this out, you see the areas where you are lacking fulfillment in life and where you are fulfilled. With that awareness and some introspection, you can create goals based around the areas you should be focusing on in order to better your life. If you go around the circle and find it to be up and down like a roller coaster, your life may not be as balanced as you may optimally like. Thus, an effort can be made to balance it out.

These types of exercises help us to understand one another in the forum. We get to know each other and our areas of strength or weakness, so we can share experiences and changes to help one another in those areas. This is a key aspect of forum: to get help and see if you are being real with where you are and how you are getting where you are going.
How balanced are the areas of your life? Do you have a peer or peer group helping you strive to improve?