

*the*

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# LIFE RAMBLINGS

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*of just another designer*



| NICKHAMMOND

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## INTRODUCTION

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*In this “book” you will find my ramblings on a broad range of topics from design, to marketing, to social media, to many others, as they relate to the world around us and the happenings of the past. All topics have been taken from the most popular of my blog posts.*

*In part, this is meant to be a reminder to be used throughout the upcoming year. Both for myself and for you. Make mistakes, learn, reflect, change, and make more mistakes.*

*We are the designers of our future.*

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# THE MAGNETIC TELEGRAPH

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*As the great Thoreau once said,*

*“Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end... We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.”*

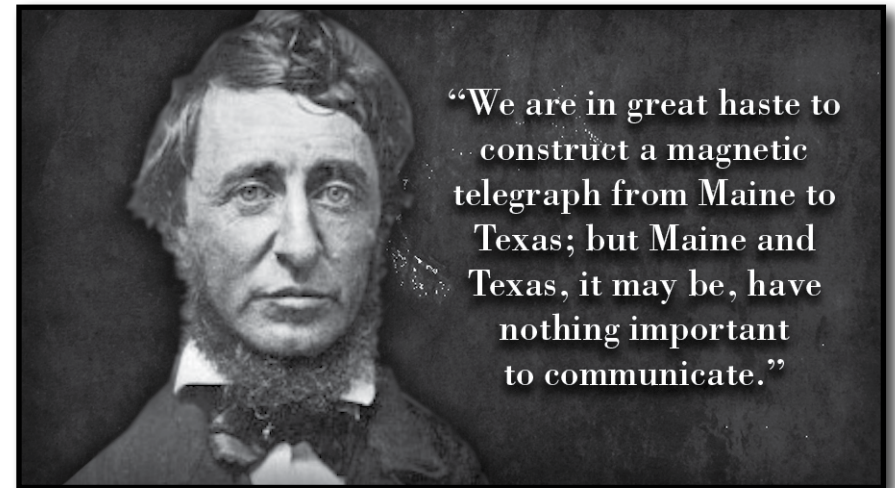
*Now I have nothing against Maine or Texas as they just happened to be used in this metaphor. I think it brings up an important concept, however. The magnetic telegraph we call social media is constantly pushing boundaries and in today's day and age we need to be able to critically evaluate it's impact on our lives.*

*Just because we have all of these tools at our disposal does not mean that we need to utilize them. If it isn't helping your business or bettering your friendships then maybe you need to take a step back. In our increasingly expanding, and time consuming, online world it becomes more than easy to get caught up in trends.*

*We need to realize that we, ourselves, all played a key role in creating the online world we see today and also play a key role in regulating it for the time to come.*

*I like to look at today as being an ancient civilization. If a future race somehow discovered our digital footprint what would they find? A whole bunch of useless noise? If we have nothing important to communicate then maybe we all just need to shut up.*

*Maybe we all just need to reevaluate what's really important.*



**“We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate.”**

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# ABCD

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*Uncertainty appears to be at the root of many major problems we face in our lives. If you know where you are, where you're going, or how you need to get somewhere then you are more likely to follow through until the end.*

*This is not only an analogy for roads, traveling, speeches, and exercise but also for life.*

*Having goals is the most effective way to combat uncertainty. Set a goal and treat it as the end, not a means to an end. Get there at whatever cost. Once you reach it, start over. Make a new goal. Create a new end.*

*How do you do this? ABCD. Attention, benefits, credentials and direction.*

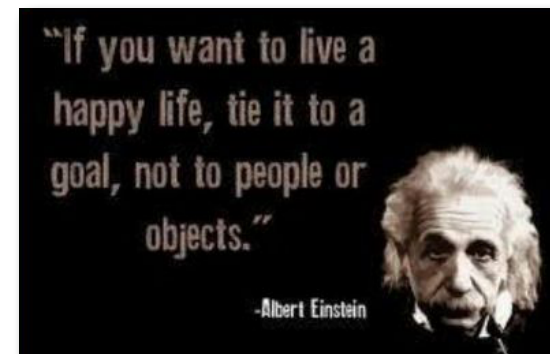
**A:** *Start by getting your own attention. What needs changing? What is your goal?*

**B:** *Figure out what benefits will be gained from meeting this new goal. Give yourself a reason to listen and a reason to put in the necessary work.*

**C:** *Establish credibility. Why should you listen to yourself? What new information do you need to learn in order to effectively complete the tasks ahead?*

**D:** *Start by moving in a direction. Without jumping in 100% to the goal you've set for yourself then these first 3 steps have been for nothing.*

*Make sure you have signposts; periods where you can actively check on your progress. Signposts help to further keep things on track and the goal in sight. It is important for these signposts to be for yourself, however. There is no quicker way to get off-track than to start meeting signposts that others have created. These signposts that others have created aren't meant for your eyes and have no bearing on the goal you set for yourself other than to distract.*



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# WHOLE-ASS ONE THING

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*I think the essence of this quote frequently gets lost. It isn't trying to urge you to drop everything you aren't successful at, but merely to get you to focus on the present moment. If your mind is cluttered with your list of chores you need to get done throughout the day, or even the week, then chances are that you aren't focusing on whatever task you are doing in the present moment. Less focus equals more half-assery.*

*This concept goes hand-in-hand with other posts I have made in the past about working on your faults and never taking "no" for an answer. Just because you have many different interests, and things you like to do, doesn't mean you need to choose between them. It simply means you need to put more of your attention, and thus effort, into the activity at hand. Stop cluttering your mind with other things that need to be done and enjoy the present...because that's what it is, a gift.*

*Perhaps the quote should read, "Never half-ass two things. Whole-ass one thing. For the gift given to those with increasing worries comes in the form of the present."*



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# THE BEST JOURNEYS

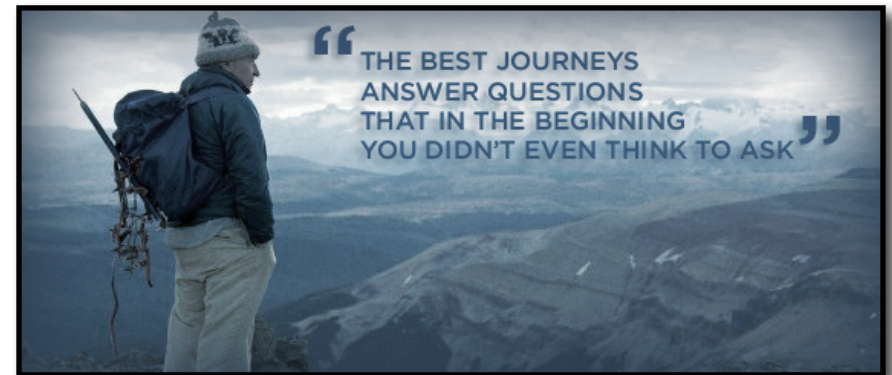
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*Whenever I have a bad day or am just in a general funk, as I'm sure most "normal" people feel every once in a while, I like to look at what I've accomplished in the past year. I use the benchmark of a year because it's a long enough time frame in which you can substantially change as a person but is also not very long in the grand scheme of things. If I can look back and say that I've changed, in a good way, over the past year then I know I am doing something right even if it is in just a small way. If not, then something needs to change.*

*Looking back just a year allows me to see how many new things have sparked my interest. It allows me to analyze the decisions I've made. It allows me to see what is working and what is not. Most importantly, it allows me to look into the future and become excited at what other things might possibly be in store.*

*I look at old acquaintances that have settled for situations in their lives whether that is a job they've had for years or a similar situation. There is something to be said about being content but you can't confuse this with stagnation. Just because you enjoy where you're at in life, or have been doing the same thing for a very long time, does not mean you should stop learning and exploring. Set a spark that starts a fire and you'll quickly wonder how you ever lived your old life.*

*So look back a year in the past and ask yourself if anything has changed for the better. Open up to new ideas and experiences. You'd be surprised at how many questions are answered, that, in the beginning, you didn't even know you had.*





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# NO PRESSURE, NO DIAMONDS

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*I get a decent amount of emails asking for helpful advice on starting a business. Most of the time the questions involve bigger picture problems and, after having conversed through several emails, the number one thing that always seems to be lacking from people is their work ethic. Maybe it isn't necessarily a lack of work ethic but perhaps just a general misunderstanding of what it takes to accomplish something like starting and maintaining your own business. Lets break it down just a tad bit.*

*There is a statistic, which states that, on average, it takes 10,000 hours of doing something to become an expert at it. I would argue that one is never an expert and that you should always be continually learning. But that's beside the point. Regardless, this would mean that in order to become an expert it would take you over 27 years of devoting 1 hour a day to whatever thing you wanted to become an expert at. Think about that for a second and realize how mind boggling that really is. Have you ever worked this hard for anything in your life? Better get going.*

*The second biggest topic that I end up discussing in these emails asking for help revolves around marketing and advertising. There is always this thought that if someone puts out their best work that they'll be "found" by some agency or person willing to make them a star. This couldn't be further from the truth. I read a quote the other day that went something like, "Late to bed, early to rise, work like hell, and advertise." Although I could have changed part of that quote to reflect my own sleeping patterns the underlying point still holds true. Just because you're willing to put in the work doesn't mean that you're going to be seen in the increasingly large expanse of noise that is now a part of our society. You have to learn how to get your name out there or you will never be seen. You have to learn how to sell yourself.*

*So when somebody tells you that it's going to take some serious work, believe them. But don't get discouraged. The time you're willing to devote to your craft will pass whether you put in the work or not. It's a much better feeling to look back and know that you took advantage of every opportunity presented.*



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# AWAKEN THE POSSIBILITY

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*As I've stated in some of my previous posts, I love to show off work that I think means something more both to the person who has created it and to the audience that is doing the viewing. Whether it be art, design, marketing, or music there is a certain quality and sincerity in these types of works that shines through in a way which separates it from the rest.*

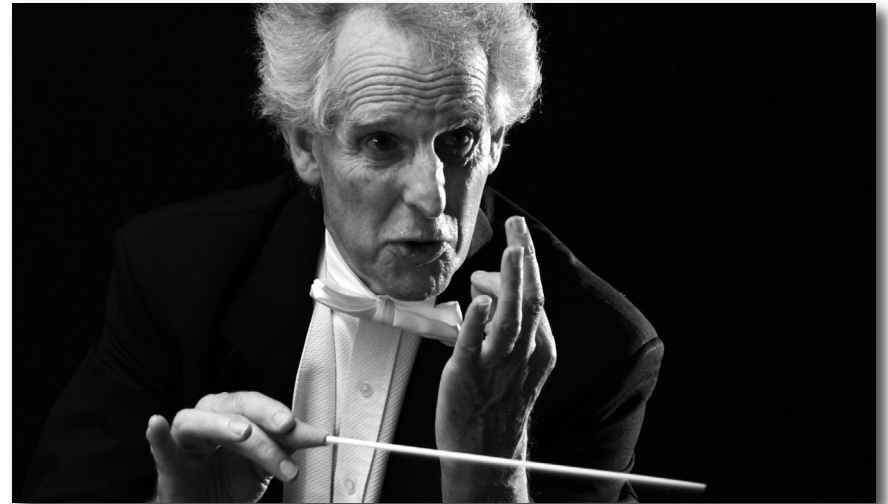
*Benjamin Zander is a composer who has displayed this quality in a way that I have never seen or heard before.*

*[\\*Click HERE to watch the video\\*](#)*

*Moral of the story:*

*If you pay close enough attention, you will forever be able to hear the impulses and it is your job to awaken this possibility in others.*

*If others aren't responding you must ask yourself the question, "Who am I being that my audience's eyes aren't shining?"*





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# BANK ACCOUNT

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*Here goes a sort of rant since lately I've been running in to more and more people saying they want to do or accomplish something. After that first stage of saying they want it, and badly at that, they proceed to half-ass whatever they intended to go after whether it be a goal or activity or anything in between.*

*Why you would go about attempting to achieve anything in this way is beyond me. Whenever you go about completing any task throughout the day you should be completing it to the best of your ability. That, or don't do it in the first place.*

*If your mind is conditioned to attempt everything, and to do so with the best of it's ability, then this transfers to other aspects of your life and only makes you a better person. You'll never fail since failure isn't an option. Every step is considered progress until you've reached your final goal.*

*We have enough mediocre people in this world who get by day-to-day doing the absolute minimum amount of work required. Don't be another one of these people.*

*So why would you spend any amount of this bank account on something that wasn't worth your while? Why would you half-ass anything? You're never getting it back, so make every second count.*

Imagine there is a bank account that credits your account each morning with \$86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening the bank deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course? Each of us has such a bank. Its name is time. Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to a good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no over draft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the remains of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no drawing against "tomorrow." You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness and success. The clock is running. Make the most of today.

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# THE MAP IS NOT THE TERRITORY

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*I heard a great quote the other day. It was so great, in fact, that it made me want to create a little graphic out of it.*

*"The Map Is Not The Territory"*

*To me, this was probably one of the most freeing things I have ever heard. It helps remind you that no matter where you are you always possess the ability to be somewhere else (both literally AND figuratively).*

*When you think of Wisconsin, what normally comes to your mind? Farmland? Cheese? Beer? All great things, but I do not intend to be judged based on these alone. My work and actions will speak wonders as my map is not my territory.*



# LAW OF ATTRACTION

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*Being that I recently posted about finding what you love to do, and having the courage to take the first step in achieving your goal in "Fish Can Climb", I realized I might have left out a key point in taking that first step. So you've figured out what you want to do in life, or at least what makes you happy, now what?*

*How do I actually go about taking those first steps?*

*Oddly enough, I found myself reevaluating this very same concept in the past couple days. The secret is to think well and living well will follow. This is called the Law of Attraction. Whatever you are thinking and feeling today is creating your future. Stop chasing a time, or thing, or place, that you think SHOULD make you happy and start BEING happy first. Once this is done then the rest will follow.*

*Being that we see news about the state of the economy every day it becomes hammered in our minds that life is hard. We start to think constantly about negative terms such as "recession" and "the 1%" (Harmless little connection to the ideas of Occupy Wallstreet). The more we think about these negative terms the more they begin to be reality since that is all that is on our minds. We're approaching our lives as if trying to accomplish something will make us feel better. In reality, feeling better is what will help us to accomplish a great many things. We need to start thinking positively and creating a world in our minds in which these economic, and other, problems do not exist. Changes as big as something that may affect the state of the economy do not come lightly, however. Sticking to these positive thoughts can take a while, but in time, will prevail.*

*This seems to have a heavy correlation to that of the creative process designers go through on a daily basis. In a way, we're all designers. What we think in our minds affects the world around us in ways that we cannot even imagine. This is why I believe the next frontier will be that of the mind, not technology. So next time you find the state of affairs in your life becoming astray take a second to*  
*1. ASK yourself where you would rather be*  
*2. BELIEVE that this will become true and*  
*3. RECEIVE the benefits whether it be directly what you had asked for or something slightly different.*



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# FISH CAN CLIMB

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*One of the greatest struggles a teenager can face is that moment when they are asked to choose not just if they want to go to college, but which college, and not only which college but what major to pursue in regards to their life career. We have it different in today's world as there are more pressures associated with choices due to the increasing amount of technological breakthroughs and events of our ever-changing time.*

*Choices that may have, at one point, seemed simple to older generations, such as continuing education, are now filled with more and more outside factors. How will we pay for our schooling? Not only that, but once that money is spent, will it pay off? Will we even be able to find a job in the field that we threw so many thousands of dollars and years of our young lives into? And at what point can we tell ourselves that the path we are currently on is no longer working?*

*People such as our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, all worked to try and reach a better quality of living. Now that it's here, and we've reached it, what do we do? The reality is that there are no answers to these questions. At some point in every person's life they have to sit down with themselves and have a conversation about what they truly want.*

*There is only so much we can do in the present to prepare for the future and there is only so much we can make out of every situation we face. Looking back into history books its clear who we have deemed heroes. It's clear how the work that they put so much energy into affected our lives today. This is not the case while living in the present. We cannot understand how or why our thoughts and actions fit into the bigger scheme of things. The missing piece is finding what you love to do and sticking with it through the incredible highs and gut wrenching lows.*

*Because at the end of the day "...everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by it's ability to climb a tree, it will live it's whole life believing that it is stupid." – Albert Einstein*





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# 3 STEPS TO ARTISTRY

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*As the year starts to wind to an end I can't help but look back at all of the design projects I have created in the past couple of months. While doing this I always try to critique myself on what I could have, and should have, done better in an effort to hone my personal style as well as expand on my knowledge of the programs that I use. After many a night thinking about this sort of thing I have come to realize what 3 steps most designers, and probably artists for that matter, go through on their way to creating their own style and brand image.*

*After realizing, of course, that we want to become part of the broader term "artist" our first step is always to try and become as good as someone we look up to. We constantly try and recreate the style and imagery of that particular master that we have so vividly engraved in our minds. This helps us to better understand how to manipulate the tools that we use to create as well as the medium we create them on or with. Most of the time, after many critiques and harsh scrutiny, we begin to realize that what we can create from our own minds is much better than that of a previous master. It slowly sinks in that, because they WERE a master, means they had an uncanny ability to relate to the masses of their generation. Well hey, this is a different generation now isn't it? The answer is yes. And with a different, more savvy, generation comes an audience that cannot be fed the same styles of art. Whatever your definition of art may be.*

*The second step is in realizing this information and expanding on it. We begin to branch out and create extraordinary things that may have never crossed our minds. The only problem with this step is that we have TOO MANY ideas and begin to create things that seem to have no connection. We take our previous knowledge and skills and go on a frenzy of attempting to get whatever point we are trying to make across. In today's world we can see this step most preva-*

*lent in the millions of social media pages that display even more images of what upcoming artists deem as "good work". It is in this, the longest and most grueling stage, where the real artists are born. After being in stage 2 for quite some time, many either burn out or become distraught with the feeling of failure after being criticized from their peers. We have to remember at this point, that these criticisms come not to hurt our feelings or to get us to give up, but to make us better. Learn to deal with the punches and you will make it to stage 3.*

*At this stage, stage 3, we start to realize how to take critiques and make them constructive. We begin to realize that nobody truly cares about our work unless we can become businessmen and women in order to sell our products we have strived to create. I don't necessarily mean "sell" and "products" in the tangible sense but more so in the figurative. It is at this stage that we begin to put all of the pieces together and harmonize. Our own specific style begins to emerge and people take more and more notice. Some of us, if we're lucky, even find a niche that has yet to be catered to and can actually make a lifestyle out of our work. Many people never reach this stage or even spend their entire lives trying to reach this stage without even knowing it.*

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*If there's one thing you take away from all of this nonsense, it is this: Stay the course.*

*-Nick*

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