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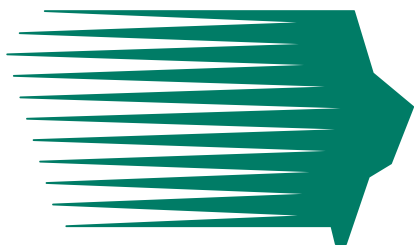
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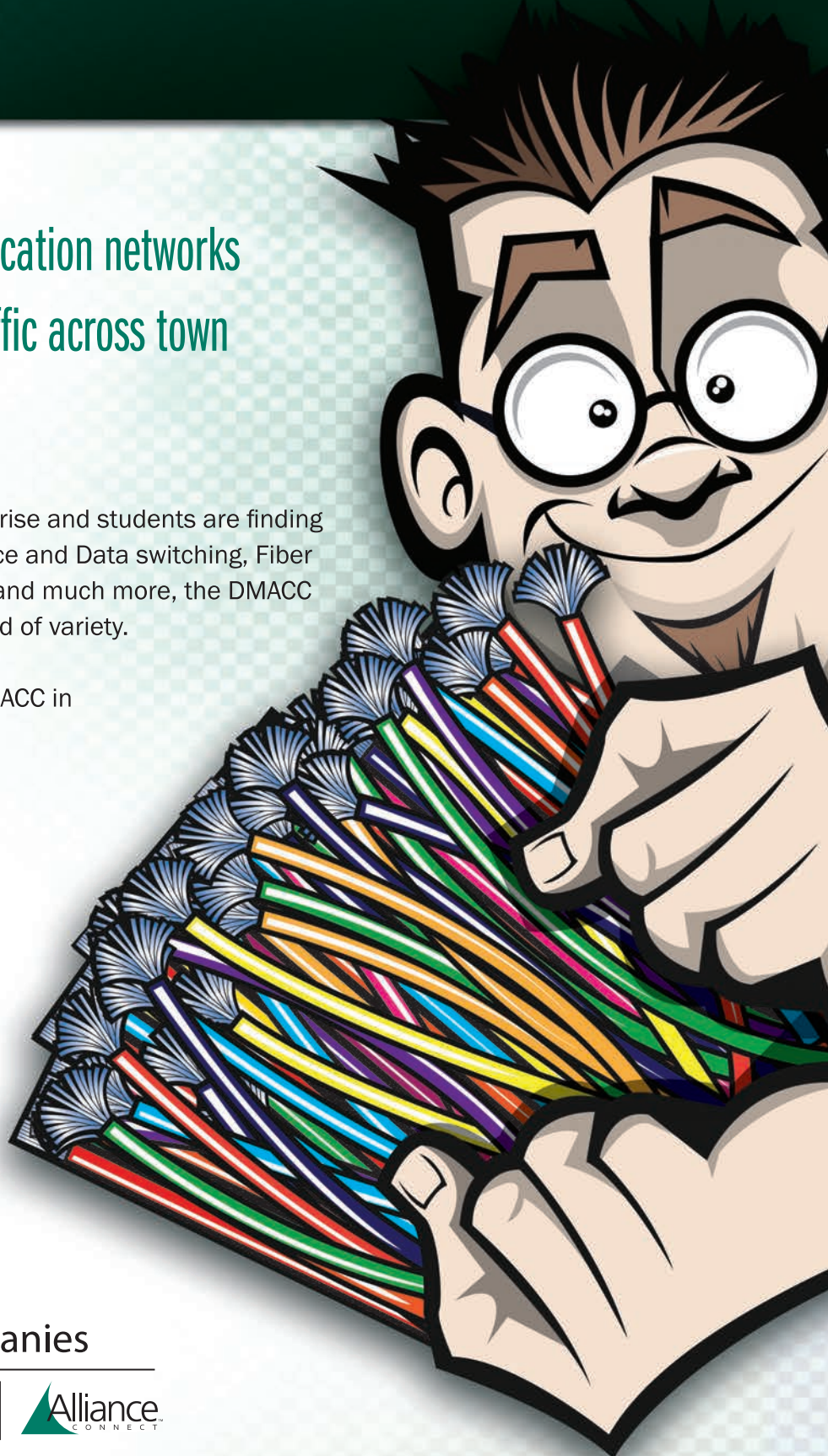
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EDITOR'S NOTE

As an English composition instructor, I've read hundreds, if not thousands, of student drafts over the years. This fact earns mixed reactions from others: everything from "What you do is so important" to "I could never do what you do—how do you grade all those papers?" Most teachers are perpetual students; in the case of writing teachers, the various essays and journal entries feed our innate curiosity. Sure, some drafts are rough-around-the-edges. Sometimes, we've read about a topic so many times that—despite a writer's best intentions—an essay can be a pretty tough sell. But often the student work provides unexpected pleasure.

Like Jessica Matthews, most teachers are motivated at least in part by a desire to have an impact on the future. Matthews, an inventor and entrepreneur, expresses this so eloquently: "The honesty and insightfulness of youth will progress society. Invest in five-year-olds, not to cure cancer, but to inspire them, so they believe they can. That way, at age 15, they will." Matthews is one of the founders of SOCKET, an innovative green product (in this case, a soccer ball) that generates energy through play. SOCKET originated through a class project when she was a student at Harvard College. In "Comfort with Uncertainty," Matthews shares the wisdom of an old soul, through the words and actions of a brilliant and ambitious adult.

Inspiration is part of what motivates us, yet it matters little if we do nothing. The ability to focus, a skill much in demand for teaching and a successful life in general, is addressed by Dr. Anthony Paustian, DMACC West Campus Provost. I have had the pleasure of working with Tony for 8 years and—maybe I'm assuming too much here—I say we know

each other well. Yet, even though I am older (by 1 year and 364 days to be exact), I still have much to learn from him. On the day I read "Booze, Sex, and Money: A Method to Focus and Improve the Quality of Your Work," I had been feeling stressed, mildly frustrated, and out of sorts in general. What had I been attempting to do? Multitask. Was I able to do so successfully? No. Did I miss the joy of the moment? Yes. After contemplating Tony's message, I was able to take a deep breath, shut out distractions, and lose myself in my work.

Working with words is a guilty pleasure: I get to play with language AND learn something new, whether through my day job at DMACC or my work on this magazine. Participating in the editing process is a little like having a private conversation with an author, where I can pick the writer's brain, and I always come away richer. In "Immersion in Everything," John Gaeta, a visual effects designer for *The Matrix Trilogy* (among other things) who works in the field of virtual reality, offers additional perspective on the creative process: "I am highly influenced by other artists' works. I believe art works in movements, and artists are inspired by one another, that they sort of evolve and reflect one another. You see branches of people leading, doing something original, which becomes more compelling to explore." His interview with Anthony Paustian allows us to gain an insider's perspective of a highly creative and demanding field, one intriguing yet unfamiliar to most.

As Gaeta's interview illustrates, the creative process from idea to product is seldom linear. West End Architectural Salvage is a Des Moines business for anyone interested in architecture, design, and material recycling. Denise Linn, in "From Tag Sale to TV Show,"

makes it apparent that a steady current of creativity, along with a generous spirit of fun, motivates the artisans, employees, and owner Don Short in everything they do. Not only do they collect what others have created, they use finds to create other objects—furniture, art, jewelry—through an innovative process of possibility and resourcefulness.

Inspiration. Focus. Ingenuity. Fun. It's what keeps artists, designers, entrepreneurs, writers, editors, teachers, and students going, despite the long hours, uncertainty, and demands of the creative process. Perhaps Tyler Fuller, a DMACC student in one of my Spring 2013 composition classes, expressed this concept best when he summed up his impressions of Celebrate! Innovation Week at DMACC West: "Leave your mark." The innovators within these pages and the minds that fill the halls of DMACC West Campus do it all the time. Now, it's your turn.



Beth Baker-Brodersen is a professor of English at the DMACC West Campus and District Chair of communications for DMACC. She may be reached at bmbakerbrodersen@dmacc.edu.

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The SOCKET. Used with permission.



BY JESSICA MATTHEWS

COMFORT WITH UNCERTAINTY

I remember exactly what a Coca-Cola executive once told me at a Fast Company event. He already knew about the SOCKET—a soccer ball that stores and harnesses kinetic energy from play to power a six-watt LED light bulb—and during our conversation he stated, “You need to become a business, so other businesses can do business with you.” This simple sentence catalyzed my then-LLC’s shift into a social enterprise called Uncharted Play. In addition to SOCKET (our flagship product), Uncharted Play is developing a jump-rope prototype, an American football, a skateboard, and a smart soccer ball.



Matthews at work with the WAMATO Trust Fund in Mbezi Beach in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Used with permission.

However, that sentence in 2010 was not the true beginning of our business philosophy. In actuality, Uncharted Play's core mission—to foster welfare by inspiring people to lead playful lives—was born through my childhood interests and experiences. I'm 25 years old, the second of four children, and a first-generation Nigerian-American. In 2010, I graduated from Harvard College with a degree in psychology and economics, and I am now working toward my MBA at Harvard Business School. I knew I wanted to pursue psychology when I was exposed to it through an advanced placement course in high school. I love social interaction including the ways people engage and make decisions. I'm fascinated by the fact that we cannot live our lives like preplanned books. On the other hand,

Like most social entrepreneurs, I don't just have far-reaching hopes for the company. I dream of a better world.

my study in economics (a decision originally made to appease my parents) allows me to understand numbers and financial systems, both extremely valuable skills.

Growing up, I was active in a myriad of extracurricular activities. From dance, karate, and basketball to academic

ventures like Model UN and science fairs, my after-school activities allowed me at an early age to diversify my interests. Once captain of my high school and college step-dance teams, I am proud today to serve as the step-team captain at Harvard Business School. Aside from my love of dancing, another desire in my life is to invent. I loved *Bill Nye the Science Guy*, and I asked for chemistry and biology sets and microscopes as gifts in my youth. From an early age, I felt fortunate to pursue so many passions both academically and athletically.

My parents sacrificed a great deal for me, and without them, I would not be who I am today. My father, an entrepreneur, raised me to be comfortable with uncertainty. I learned situations would be sometimes troublesome, and that was all right. I learned situations would

I love social interaction including the ways people engage and make decisions. I'm fascinated by the fact that we cannot live our lives like preplanned books.

be sometimes triumphant, and that was better. I know now not to stress over little things because I have a way to get through any situation.

My mother did not just give me the drive to do, but to accomplish. She would see, for example, kids making video games on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and instruct my sister and me to make video games too. It didn't matter that I was seven and had no idea how to code. She would stop at nothing to remind us to be the best we could be. Due to her encouragement, that attitude is now ingrained.

The fact that my parents are immigrants contributes to their powerful motivation. Simultaneous to building the best life for our family in the U.S., my parents kept my siblings and me close to our Nigerian heritage. My experiences in Nigeria helped fully shape *Uncharted Play*. A few months before the SOCKET was developed, I visited Nigeria for my uncle's wedding. I remember distinctly choking on the fumes of a diesel generator outside my aunt's home. My cousins said, "Don't worry, you'll get used to it." Their complacency bothered me; they didn't want to change the situation. But what they did want, along with so many other people I encountered on my trip, was to play soccer. Around my aunt's compound, kids were kicking whatever they



Two SOCKETs with lights. Used with permission.

could find—plastic bottles, caps, bundled-up garbage. Still, their skills were more impressive than a FIFA-level game. Inspiration for the SOCKET was everywhere.

In the fall of 2008, I came across a class called *Idea Translation: Affecting Change through Art and Science*. Essentially, students would get money to develop incredible innovations. This course pushed the idea that there are more than just two ways to see the world. There should be a depth to the way people design solutions. The task, at its surface, seemed simple: come up with a problem that is meaningful, then devise a solution. I thought back to Nigeria. There was my impetus.

The idea appeared easier than it ended up being. However, I knew it would be a good product, maybe not huge,

but meaningful. I was persistent in my belief the SOCKET would matter in the same way it was worth developing. So, I pursued it. Many people said it was a good idea, but a lot of people called it impractical. I was smart about its growth, but I was also ambitious and naïve. Ironically, this lack of awareness allowed me to get through things that people said I could not do. It's much easier to think outside of the box when you have no idea there's a box in the first place. From the beginning, I knew I had to be my biggest cheerleader; I needed to believe and have the passion for my project that would pull others to it, not push them away. Even though I did not realize the hardships ahead, my general ability to do this allowed me to continue despite obstacles.



Mathews with President Obama playing with a SOCKET during his African tour. Used with permission.

My father, an entrepreneur, raised me to be comfortable with uncertainty. I learned situations would be sometimes troublesome, and that was all right. I learned situations would be sometimes triumphant, and that was better.

the ball. The SOCKET will continue to evolve. Recognizing that the best products grow with people, versus stay stagnant, helped me become comfortable with putting the SOCKET out there even though I knew it wasn't perfect.

The hardest thing about developing the SOCKET was something I realized only in retrospect after years of working on the product and building a business around it. The world of business is not a playground where everyone interrelates fairly. Sometimes, things were inefficient, money was periodically lost, and on occasion, relationships were ruined. The reason is simple: not everyone involved knew what it would take to run an effective business. There is a difference between a group of women in a classroom and a thriving company. Bridging that gap was difficult. Now, it is easier to navigate, but it's never an easy thing to accept.

Since the initial hardships, the SOCKET has significantly evolved. The first prototype was a hamster ball with a shake-and-charge flashlight. Then, we started to pull apart the flashlight and use normal soccer balls. In total, the SOCKET went through six or seven iterations, a typical amount for a research and development company. When we launched our large pilot testing program, the SOCKET was good enough to sustain the rough terrain and conditions of resource-poor communities. Now, we want to present this product to the developed world. We plan on launching the SOCKET to private consumers in late August 2013. Still, we have more changes in mind to improve the output and balance of

From the initial prototype to its current form, a key characteristic remained constant. The SOCKET represents a visualization of the hard-to-conceptualize notion of energy. In truth, energy, whether present or not, is a tangible thing. It is one of the most important resources next to water and food. Ultimately, the SOCKET is a personal but simple experience. As an individual, you feel empowered on any socioeconomic level. The goal is to inspire people, so they can be innovative and creative. People can be inventors without having a doctorate, a degree of any kind, or even a traditional education. I want people to know they can build something amazing to address issues in

their communities. The SOCKET gives people energy both literally to light their homes and figuratively as a driving force to push individuals to accomplish things they may not think they can do.

Personally, I am energized by inspiration, specifically, fortitude. Seeing someone who lives in a poor country yet smiles every day, epitomizes comfort with uncertainty. I am also inspired when I see individuals who see the entire picture. Michelle Obama, for example, is one of the most amazing women for how she handles problems and stays calm. I imagine she is someone who attempts to see the whole issue before addressing it. When I hear about or interact with people who possess these qualities, I feel motivated to keep pushing forward. This allows me to look toward the future of Uncharted Play.

What lies ahead is encompassed by focused expansion. I'm working hard to focus attention on the company, not just the SOCKET. I want to address more social causes—like water and food insecurities—through play. Furthermore, I want to continue to harness the potential of green technologies. Green is good business. As soon as people start seeing that green means long-term economic and environmental sustainability, the global community will start to wholly embrace it. Yet global change also needs investment. My advice: invest in young individuals. In the *Emperor's New Clothes*, only the youngest child was willing to say the Emperor was undressed. The honesty and insightfulness of youth will progress society. Invest in five-year-olds, not to cure cancer, but to inspire them, so they believe they can. That way, at age 15, they will.

Like most social entrepreneurs, I don't just have far-reaching hopes for the company. I dream of a better world. In the developing world, I work every day for greater energy equality. Setting up huge, expensive systems in resource-



Tanzanian kids with the SOCKET. Used with permission.

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poor areas is counterproductive. It's unnecessary for third-world countries to follow the exact steps for industrialization once followed by the United States. Things shouldn't be thought about so narrowly. Everyone should work toward one goal—energy equality—and take individualized, necessary steps to get there.

The truth is, the poverty known in the United States compared to the poverty known abroad is vastly different. In Syrian Refugee Camps in Jordan, for instance, people were literally taken from their homes, a situation beyond poverty. The children felt lost. Equally unsettling, in Tanzania at Mbezi Beach, there are

huge mansions with shanties in harsh juxtaposition located right next door. Six kids, their parents, and all of their chickens might live in a 75-square-foot home with no water, no restroom, and barely any food. Yet in lands of so much adversity and hostility, there is a cheerful constant: everybody plays. Play brings people something in their day-to-day lives that is impossible to fabricate. It is so authentic and beautiful. The SOCKET—and one day, our other products—have the potential to address the world's ills in a way that amplifies this joy.

It is vital to expand beyond the SOCKET due to differing cultural needs and customs. In many Muslim countries, girls cannot play outside past age 12. With the jump rope we've developed, these kids will be able to have fun indoors and not be at an energy disadvantage. Tailoring to the diverse interests and needs of places overseas will allow a multitude of kids to say "How does this work?" thus sparking an important inquisitiveness toward science and technology.

To accomplish our many goals in the developing world, we need the help of those in the developed world. As a for-profit company, we won't simply be an afterthought. We can be an efficient and productive business that designs innovative products to keep our company alive. I am proud to create items people genuinely want. I want to squash the misconception that non-profits versus for-profits equate to a dichotomy as huge as that of Mother Teresa and Bernie Madoff, with no middle ground. We can do well and do good at the same time.

I am proud others have seen our vision. Recently, in Tanzania, President Barack Obama endorsed our product. It is an honor that President Obama believes we have such a solid level of legitimacy. It is a promise I have known since we first distributed the SOCKET in Soweto, South Africa. I saw children's lives

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tangible thing.*

changed right before me. Since then, my eyes have opened to the synergistic effects of play and utility combined. I am thrilled other people see that too.

Yet success is not just about having respected people in my industry and community say something good about Uncharted Play. To measure success, I need to examine my abilities and contemplate whether I am satisfied and happy with my impact. I don't feel like our company is a success yet. To overcome the hurdles between Uncharted Play and "success," it is necessary to problem-solve. To do that, I get a pen and paper and think. I watch people outside for inspiration. I research. I prime my mind. I refuse to get discouraged easily. The more problems our team solves in unique and creative ways, the closer to success we will be.

I started Uncharted Play to further a mission. My biggest tool in doing so might surprise you. To me, there is no instrument better than laughter to bring me closer to the values and culture of my vision for Uncharted Play: happiness, bravery, authenticity, honesty, and sustainability. Without finding humor daily, I could not create a tone in the company of positivity, empathy, and teamwork. Thus, it is so easy for me to fully love what I am doing. After all, at Uncharted Play, work and play are all the same.

As the co-founder and chief executive officer of Uncharted Play, Inc., Matthews drives the creative vision of an award-winning social enterprise which inspires people to lead playful lives. Matthews is a recipient of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Next Generation Award (2013) and was named as one of Black Enterprise's "40 Under 40 Next Generation of Women in Power (2012). Other accolades include being named Scientist of the Year by the Harvard Foundation (2012), one of the "10 Most Powerful Women Entrepreneurs" by *Fortune* (2011), and Next Generation Breakthrough Innovator by *Popular Mechanics* (2010). She was also invited by President Barack Obama to the White House to represent small companies for the signing of the America Invents Act 2012.

Matthews research and career centers around disruptive technology, consumer behavior, and social psychology. A dual citizen of Nigeria and the U.S., Matthews has a degree in psychology and economics from Harvard College, and is currently working toward her MBA at Harvard Business School.



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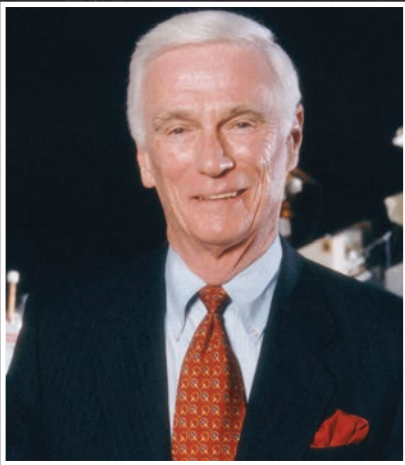
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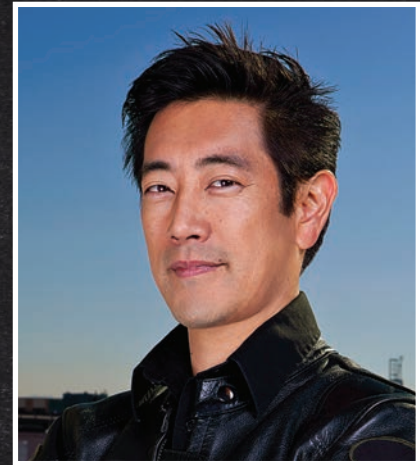
During 20 years as a naval aviator, including 13 years with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Captain Eugene A. Cernan left his mark on history with three historic missions in space as the pilot of Gemini IX, the Lunar Module pilot of Apollo X, and the commander of Apollo XVII.

In December 2007, the National Aeronautic Association recognized Captain Cernan with the prestigious Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy. He also authored the 1999 book, *The Last Man on the Moon*.



PHIL HANSEN

Phil Hansen is a multimedia artist who works at the intersection of traditional visual art, pointillism, and offbeat techniques. He is most widely known for his meta-art and creation process videos that show millions art is action, not just result. His work has been featured on the Discovery Channel, CNN, CBS, *Good Morning America*, the *Rachael Ray Show*, *Last Call with Carson Daly*, and other media venues. He has worked on a variety of TV and Internet campaigns including the *GRAMMY Awards*, Skype, Diesel, and Arby's. Hansen is also the author of *Tattoo a Banana and Other Ways to Turn Anything and Everything into Art*.



GRANT IMAHARA

One of the hosts of Discovery Channel's *Mythbusters*, Grant Imahara blends science and fun while putting urban legends to the test, sometimes with explosive results. Before *Mythbusters*, Imahara spent 9 years in special effects as an animatronics engineer and modelmaker for George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic. He worked on numerous blockbusters including *The Matrix* sequels, *Galaxy Quest*, *Terminator 3*, and *Star Wars: Episodes 1-3* (although he is NOT responsible for Jar Jar).

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To Do List

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The "To Do List" found in Anthony Paustian's planner. Used with permission.



BY DR. ANTHONY PAUSTIAN

BOOZE, SEX, & MONEY

*A Method to Focus and Improve
the Quality of Your Work*

If you're like most people, odds are you're swamped, so much to do and so little time to do it. We wade through our days trying to balance ever-growing responsibilities, which, if done simultaneously, enables us to feel more productive. We call this "multitasking," and many believe the better we are at it, the more effective and efficient we will be. We tend to view multitasking as a positive, frequently sought-after attribute. In fact, as many of you read this, you're also likely responding to text messages, watching the news, eating lunch, reading the paper, and planning the rest of your day.



Illustration of multitasking by Michael Paustian. Used with permission.

However, to truly multitask is a myth. Sure, you can chew gum while walking, listen to music while vacuuming, eat lunch while reading, or fold laundry while talking on the phone. But these activities don't require higher-order, problem-solving skills or much brainpower of any kind.

Psychologists who have long-studied the concept of multitasking have found the brain is unable to focus on more than one thing at a time. When people multitask, they actually shift their attention from one thing to another at fast speeds, and each time they switch focus between tasks, their minds must cope with the new information.

According to Earl Miller, a professor of neuroscience at MIT, "People can't multitask very well, and when people say they can, they're deluding themselves . . . Switching from task to

Sure, you can chew gum while walking, listen to music while vacuuming, eat lunch while reading, or fold laundry while talking on the phone. But these activities don't require higher-order, problem-solving skills or much brainpower of any kind.

task, you think you're actually paying attention to everything around you at the same time. But you're actually not."

There are several reasons for this, but one is that similar tasks compete to use the same parts of the brain. For example, talking on the phone and writing an email are nearly impossible to do concurrently because of what neuroscientists call "interference." Both tasks involve communication skills and contend for similar space in the brain. Multitasking doesn't make us more productive; in fact, the quality of our effort suffers.

Another major downside to multitasking: the negative effect it has on our stress levels as we try to balance a multitude of simultaneous activity and feel overwhelmed, drained, and anxious.²



One of my favorite sweet spots is the paris pool in Las Vegas. Used with permission.

The Art of Singletasking

Although I can't claim to be a model of efficiency (I too get sucked into the false hope of multitasking), I have learned how to effectively maximize my efforts and accomplish large tasks and projects. Time is finite, and we all have the same amount of it (24 hours per day/7 days per week). In order to maximize my productivity, I adopted three strategies that greatly impact not only the number of positive outcomes I can accomplish, but also the quality of my work.

1. Set Aside Time

It's human nature to deal with things as they occur. Our days have a tendency to fill on their own; as a result, we find ourselves constantly "putting out fires," thus becoming regularly distracted by the constant change in events.

Therefore, to do anything of quality and significance, proactively schedule time (even if in short amounts) when you will work on ONLY one task and nothing else. To write this piece, I had to schedule four hours on a Sunday afternoon when I would do NOTHING except write. I made sure I let the dog out, I took care of my physical needs, and I placed a beverage by my side prior to beginning. During those four hours, I did nothing else. I have employed this strategy for virtually every task of significance whether writing a book, designing a project, preparing a presentation, or creating a strategic plan. Not only am I able to accomplish each, but I'm also certain the quality of my work significantly improved because I remained focused.

2. Find a Sweet Spot

Like many, I spend the bulk of my life in some unproductive locations. Whether it's my office at work, my office at home, or my home in general, these locations can be ground zero for dealing with a constant stream of distractions. To remain truly focused and productive during the time I set aside, I must work away from the normal, daily distractions at a secondary location where I feel creative and energized. For me, those places involve local restaurants and vacation spots. I wrote my entire doctoral dissertation at Applebee's, my first book at Chili's, and my most recent book, *Beware the Purple People Eaters: A Personal Look at Leadership*, at Subway (and most of the planning, outlining, and researching for that book was done poolside in Las Vegas). For whatever reason, these places allow me to be focused, energized, and creative. Find your place(s). Go there EVERY time you set aside time to focus (as I write this, I'm sitting at Subway).

3. Go Off-Grid

Like an addict goes to rehab to cut off access to addictions, productivity needs to be cut off from distractions. Even if you set aside time and go to your sweet spot, it won't work unless you unplug and disconnect. I'm convinced distractions will follow. The phone will ring, text messages will appear, and emails will arrive, all of which are huge temptations screaming for attention. And, like most addicts, we will be frequently unable to resist these distractions. (Speaking of distractions, was it the title of this article that caused you to read it?) Turn off the smartphone. Disconnect the laptop. Short of an emergency or crisis (which seldom happen), everything can wait. Even Bill Gates, during the hectic growth period of Microsoft in the 1980s and 90s, realized this. Each year, he would set aside time to relax, disconnect, and use time alone to read and think.³

These three simple actions have a huge positive effect not only on my productivity, but also on the quality of my work. They allow me to focus intently for scheduled blocks of time while putting my best efforts toward the desired task. Although they might be simple in concept, they aren't always simple to do. They require discipline and, most of all, frequent practice. Start by creating a routine and setting aside small amounts of time. You might be shocked at what you can accomplish during only 30 minutes a day when highly focused.

@ the Speed of Life

Although I believe singletasking is an ideal method to improve the quality of our work, perhaps I should be asking why we try to multitask in the first place. Where did this current notion of cramming as much as possible into one day come from?

I believe the answers can be found by looking at two distinct yet interrelated aspects of everyday life: technology and our level of happiness.

When I was in high school, personal computers were in their infancy. Way too expensive for the vast majority, PCs with any real power to be productive were only found at the corporate level. Some high schools and colleges were beginning to use them, but for the most part, the average person still had little to no personal contact with a computer. Cell phones didn't yet exist, let alone anything remotely resembling today's power-packed smartphones. In other words, by today's standards, people were pretty disconnected. To communicate, you either made a call from a bulky telephone (plugged into a wall jack), talked face-to-face, or sent letters.

Like an addict goes to rehab to cut off access to addictions, productivity needs to be cut off from distractions. Even if you set aside time and go to your sweet spot, it won't work unless you unplug and disconnect.

The lack of available, personal technology resulted in a slower life; one that required a higher level of patience (since communication was seldom ever instant), greater planning and coordination (since longer lead times had to be built into nearly everything), and better interpersonal skills (since most people were required to relate on a more personal level).

Current technology demands an entirely new context; one where expectations of "instant" are now the norm (be honest, when you send a text message or leave a voicemail, how long are you willing to wait for a response before feeling frustrated . . . even a little?), one where people spend less time thinking through their days to maximize productivity (since most things can now be done on the fly), and one where the need for interpersonal skills between actual people continues to diminish as a larger percentage of our communication is virtual.

This change in context (especially for younger generations who know nothing else) combined with the ubiquity of personal electronics resulted in daily expectations of immediacy and convenience. Ultimately, we do more in less time, and thus create—and perpetuate—the myth of multitasking. Unfortunately, while technology has definitely become more capable, our minds still work basically the same. To do your best work, singletask.



When I was young, "mobility" was defined by the length of the handset cords on our rotary telephones. Used with permission.

Slow down.

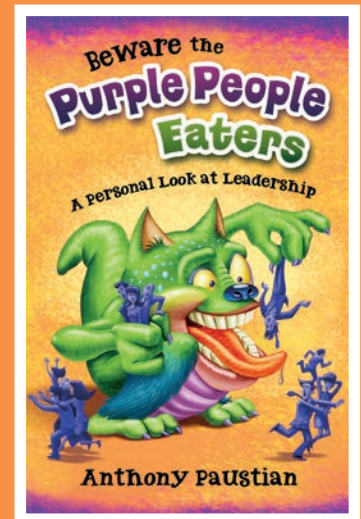
Happiness, on the other hand, is an entirely different discussion. Humans have always strived to be happy, and the tendency has been to try and use whatever we have at our disposal to achieve happiness. Whether through status, stuff, or other people (or, in some cases, booze, sex or money), we have a desire to feel valuable in both our own eyes as well as the eyes of others. For many, happiness frequently revolves around how busy we are as “busy-ness” implies productivity, which implies striving toward a better or different life in the future. And if we are not busy cramming all that we can into the shortest amount of time possible, we assume we are failing ourselves and falling short of our dreams.

This approach tends to be totally future-focused, which isn't necessarily bad, except we can easily miss the joys and value found in the now. Too often, many of us feel like our lives are out of control, and sometimes, we can only see the present just after it has become the past. We may frequently find ourselves absent from the moment as any one of great number of distractions pulls our attention in a variety of directions.

If getting older has taught me anything, it's that time is finite. There's never enough. I'm amazed at the growing frequency of what I call “time-lapse realizations” that occur the moment I accomplish some goal or objective. While I'm happy I achieved what I set out to do, a sudden realization often follows that getting there came at great expense. A feeling of emptiness often overtakes me, as if I had been transported into the future with little memory of the daily joys from the actual act of doing. I realize how fast time raced by, and because I was so goal-oriented, I was unable to fully enjoy the experiences related to the process.

I've now come to embrace that happiness is a choice, and there's nothing tangible that can “make” me happy in the long-term. No matter what we work toward or feel like we must have, typically the happiness attached to it is only short-term. “Hedonic adaptation” is a psychologist's way of saying the novelty wears off. Eventually, that new house or car or smart TV you saved for becomes just another thing you own, or the job you worked so hard to get becomes just part of your daily grind. Your lifestyle adapts, and you're back to wanting more.⁴

Slow down. Enjoy the moments of each day. Focus on one thing at a time. Singletask, and the memories will stay with you. Even better, they're adaptation-proof.



Dr. Anthony Paustian is the author of *Beware the Purple People Eaters: A Personal Look at Leadership* and the Provost of the DMACC West Campus.



◀ www.adpaustian.com



◀ www.dmacc.edu/ciweek

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Don Short standing by the main entrance of West End Architectural Salvage. Used with permission.



BY DENISE LINN

FROM TAG SALE TO TV SHOW:

*Creativity Thrives at
West End Architectural Salvage*

The crew at West End Salvage is a mix of ages and skill-sets, each with unique talent to add to the brewing pot that simmers within the business. Like Mulligan stew, each project becomes richer as it cooks. West End Architectural Salvage occupies a four-story, 50,000-square-foot building on 9th Street in downtown Des Moines. Once home to a grocery warehouse, the space is filled with everything from repurposed jewelry made from old typewriter keys to doorknobs and dining room tables.



Exterior of West End Architectural Salvage. Used with permission.

A tour of the basement workshop introduces a small group of music-loving maestros who pour their metal and woodworking talents into projects designed by owner Don Short. Whether creating a dining buffet from raw barn wood or adding drawers to an antique credenza, the wood artisans enjoy meeting a client's special requirements. The artisans handpick their materials from a constant supply of newly reclaimed wood from area barns and sheds.

Other members of the workshop team include a guy who devotes his day to creating various-sized frames for tin ceiling tiles to display as wall art and another artisan who cuts old copper boilers and tin tiles into patchwork, quilt-like pieces. Each patchwork is truly

a work of art; no two are exactly alike. The patterns he creates unfold gradually as he pounds each puzzle piece into place, exposing beauty and bringing the project to life.

From the torch room, a continuous supply of table bases flows. Each base is custom-made to the client's exact dimensions specified on Don Short's pencil sketch. The pair of metalworking geniuses cranks out D-Art stands, stools, and chairs fashioned from old church pews as well as the one-of-the-kind requests they field regularly. They restore things like a vintage stagecoach door that needs metal bars in the door's window frame or an old auger shaft that will support a 30-million-year-old stone fossil tabletop.

Keeping a fresh, unconventional edge to this unique retail experience is the recipe that is never perfected, for just when the flavors seem to peak, a new trend forces adjustment.

Once completed in the workshop, a project's next stop is finishing. It's not a straightforward step in the progression to the final piece. Often asked to recreate amazing designs in stain and paint from magazine photos, the finishing team earns its stripes in trial-and-error. Their expertise is second-to-none as they craft the finishing touches to make each piece a work of art. Included in their skills are techniques for custom-blended stains and special painting effects. A close eye for detail prevents the slightest drip or imperfection. On most weekends, visitors will get a front-row seat to observe the transformation in the finishing area.

Without dedicated "pickers," it would be a constant struggle to self-source the array of items most popular at West End Architectural Salvage. Several individuals and teams scour the countryside to locate unique wares. Extra salvage resources abound as daily phone calls and emails spill in with opportunities to acquire almost anything. Imagine the constant challenge presented in merchandising a conveyor belt of rustic goods as they make their way from picker's trailer to thrilled buyer. Once again, the creative process is illumined as gifted designers



Sampling of tin wall art. Used with permission.

Having accumulated an array of cool, old architectural finds over two decades, Short had been—and continues to be—steeped in creative juices, inspired by the artisanship of a bygone era.

fashion themed vignettes that spark a client's imagination. Grouped by similar color or era, the harmony of the display grabs the intent focus of a visitor on a mission to find the right item. Other groupings juxtapose pieces with absolutely no relationship, spurring curious looks from passersby.

Ensuring a clear path for visitors to pass through each of the four floors keeps the design team hopping seven days a week, as West End Architectural Salvage only closes a few holidays a year. Given that inventory can arrive in multiple truckloads and occasionally leave by the truckload, the single freight elevator is an essential fixture for moving goods to and from upper floors. Teams of employees lend their muscles to move, protect, and pack items for

transit. Holding a constant eye on the front-counter, they bounce from manual labor to customer service with ease.

It's difficult to capture a 360-degree perspective on the creative spirit that drives the success of West End Architectural Salvage. Keeping a fresh, unconventional edge to this unique retail experience is the recipe that is never perfected, for just when the flavors seem to peak, a new trend forces adjustment. Some ingredients never change: focusing on the customer's experience and enjoyment; building a team of talented, flexible, dedicated employees; and staying one step ahead of the game. The main ingredient, though, is Don Short.

Whoever said "Out with the old, in with the new" set Short's destiny on



The staff of West End Architectural Salvage reviews a new design. Used with permission.

its path. Another man's junk is truly Short's treasure. His unique intersection of experiences prepared him for the success he enjoys today. His family owns Taylor's Maid-Rite in Marshalltown, Iowa. He moved there to work at the restaurant in 1985 after graduating from the University of North Dakota. Blessed with boundless energy, Don filled his off-hours remodeling and restoring 14 Marshalltown homes—including the 10,000-square-foot Willard Mansion. He lived in the home, eventually opening up some areas to host local events and receptions. "I had always been involved in restoring properties and running restaurants, so it was a natural fit," says Short.

In 2004, Short switched from Maid-Rite to home restoration in Des Moines. Eventually, the volume of remnants from his remodeling jobs became so

unwieldy that he scheduled a two-weekend tag sale that spawned a new enterprise: West End Architectural Salvage. Short explains, "It really wasn't my original plan to start a business, but we were so busy we just kept open on the weekends, and it exploded."

Having accumulated an array of cool, old architectural finds over two decades, Short had been—and continues to be—steeped in creative juices, inspired by the artisanship of a bygone era. What distinguishes Short's treasure trove from finds in Grandma and Grandpa's attic? Sheer entrepreneurial spirit and an eye for design. His keen sense of home furnishing trends adds to the equation.

Short quickly added a coffeeshop to the main floor of West End Architectural Salvage, encouraging each patron to grab a coffee or beer while perusing

Other members of the workshop team include a guy who devotes his day to creating various-sized frames for tin ceiling tiles to display as wall art and another artisan who cuts old copper boilers and tin tiles into patchwork, quilt-like pieces.

the four floors that house the eclectic collection of antiques, collectibles, and architectural remnants. With the immense square footage of the shop and a liquor license in place, it became a natural spot to host corporate events, showers, weddings, receptions, fundraisers, and public gatherings. From the workshop, finished custom pieces now reside temporarily in the dock area, the same space that gives way to a dance floor, which easily becomes the main attraction for wedding celebrations.

Yet after seven years of business, sales, and hosting, West End Architectural Salvage still operates without paid advertising. Short states, "We've always relied on word-of-mouth to bring our business through the doors." He adds, "Of course, having a reality TV show hasn't hurt either!" One of Des Moines' best-kept secrets burst onto



Guests enjoy an event at the warehouse. Used with permission.

the national scene in February 2013 when the shop premiered its reality TV series by the same name on the HGTV network. Now embracing a nationwide following, West End Architectural Salvage enjoys recognition and daily visits from its fans across the country.

So, what prompted influential media executives to make West End Architectural Salvage a stop as they crisscrossed the country? Flash to an episode of the D-ART contest—a creative challenge between Short and the team in the workshop to take diverse pieces of anything in the building and assemble them artistically into coffee-table art. Imagine old foundry molds, barn pulleys, pressure gauges, and gears balanced precariously on a simple metal stand.

The show captures the true camaraderie and creativity that converge within West End Architectural Salvage's walls to make this environment a must-see. Armed with wicked wit and a sincere interest in people, Short is quick to establish a bond with visitors who soon feel like lifelong friends. He sets the bar high and expects employees to rise to it: "It's about establishing an immediate comfort zone for visitors, helping them find whatever it is that brought them to us, and instilling a burning desire to

return with a friend or two in tow."

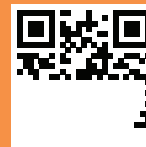
Short's generous spirit is evident with his support of community nonprofits facing the challenge of fundraising. These nonprofit events hold frequent spots on the West End Architectural Salvage calendar, as the business offers a distinctive venue. There is plenty of space to display donated auction items, and ample room for patrons to view the items and enjoy the synergy of a like-minded purpose.

West End Architectural Salvage has earned the trust of many professional designers who source items for their commercial projects. A steady stream of work flows from the orders of a designer featured in one of the HGTV show's episodes in which a vintage car door was encased in a wooden frame to protect the curious from sharp edges. The piece became a functional memory-queue for a dementia care facility. Old wooden shafts from decommissioned pipe organs are grouped together in assorted heights to create sculpture for residents' interest. The list of noteworthy designs for memory stimulation remains endless in a place like West End Architectural Salvage.

Born and raised in Wright County, IA, Denise Linn grew up on a century-old, family farm where pitching in and getting dirty weren't optional. Following graduation from Eagle Grove High School, she attended Iowa Central Community College and completed her studies in business at Iowa State University. She spent nearly 20 years in commercial real estate in Des Moines, working in various capacities of research, marketing, and development activities before landing at West End Architectural Salvage to enjoy the free-spirited creativity.



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Future Cinema. Used with permission.



IMMERSION IN EVERYTHING:

An Interview with John Gaeta

John Gaeta is best known for his work as the visual effects designer for The Matrix Trilogy. After speaking at ciWeek 2013, Gaeta expressed his appreciation for the DMACC West philosophy: “I think the kids are lucky to get to experience being there. I hope they get the type of education you can’t get from textbooks, which is advice about how life works and to take it seriously.” In a follow-up interview, he and Dr. Anthony Paustian, DMACC West Campus Provost, talked about Gaeta’s creative process.



John Gaeta oversees a panoramic stills shoot. Used with permission.

Most children don't dream of becoming visual effects designers. What drove you to specialize in this area?

It was not a purposeful choice, although I knew I wanted to pursue film. In high school, I liked photography and theater, so I thought that would be an area I could excel at. I wanted to tell stories and create imagery, but I didn't know much more than that. It was my experiences at NYU that led me to understand there were a lot of creative avenues I had not originally thought of. I met many people in the sort of secretive stage-labs of New York City, where I became intrigued by the highly creative photography and early stages of computer graphics artists were pursuing. I met a number of people who were bouncing between special effects and other things. Some were friends with Peter Gabriel at the time and were working on his music videos. Others were working with *Saturday Night Live*. I was able to sort of bounce between their collective groups, which gave me a more rounded experience.

Looking back on your education and life experiences, what influenced you the most?

It has a lot to do with the people you meet along the journey and creating good relationships that you follow and nurture. In my case, I met people who were doing interesting things with music videos and such. They got an opportunity to work with a man named Douglas Trumbull, who for some time was equal to George Lucas in innovation in film, graphics, and new movie formats. These friends heard he was setting up a secret studio in Western Massachusetts, with the most modern bits of technology, to create a new type of movie he called a "Ride Film." He was experimenting with simulation rides, where you could sit in a motion simulator, like you would in aeronautics and pilot training. What Trumbull wanted to do was make these films at the highest fidelity and quality to allow viewers to go to fantasy places and not just fly over landscapes. All of the sudden, I noticed my artist friends heading to western Massachusetts, so I followed them.

That, to me, is what changed my life. I discovered a completely different point of view about the future of movies. Trumbull's philosophy was about the experience as much as anything else. He loved the story, as we all did, but he was also focused on trying to create a high-fidelity, immersive experience, really focused on the concepts of virtual reality. He did this film *Brain Storm* about that topic. I sit here today squarely pointed at a future of augmented reality. Virtual reality—and immersive media experiences of all sorts—is the direction I am heading now.

What inspires you to create and innovate?

I am highly influenced by other artists' works. I believe art works in movements, and artists are inspired by one another, that they sort of evolve and reflect one another. You see branches of people leading, doing something original, which becomes more compelling to explore. I follow online galleries avidly. I go to see art occasionally. I also spend a lot of time observing ordinary people and everyday life; that is a great inspiration

of mine. Lastly, I would say sound. Sound and music are very important to me while I'm trying to be creative.

What advice do you have for others who want to follow your path? What are three things that someone should do or not do in this business?

Well, I'm not the CEO of Facebook, which might be the path some would prefer. I had a kind of wild and windy path, one that to some degree, I have chosen because of my curiosity. There are things to do and not to do. One, be curious and observant. Always search for emerging things. Two, spend time investigating what other people are doing around the world. I would definitely suggest taking risks—at properly timed moments. There are times to be practical and a good supporter of other people, and there are times to take chances to show others what you can do and who you are, and you need to understand when the timing is right. It's hard to explain, but there is a rhythm that exists, a rhythm of when to take risks and when to be a driven supporter. The third thing I would suggest is to identify with others and seek them out; don't sit on the side and say, "Well, I'll try to find my own version . . ." Take a chance and try to get involved with something you find great and inspiring . . . like literally go there. If you don't succeed, that's fine; you tried.

I mention this to students every now and then: Internships can be an amazing vehicle to get into a career track fast because you are offering yourself for free. There are some logistics involved, but you still are helpful to a company that needs to watch its bottom line yet get as much extra help as it can. Internships provide opportunities to go precisely to the place you want to be and see if they'll take you. And it's true outside, after school too, that you don't settle for second best until you have to. Try to go to where you want, as quickly as you can. Things to avoid: not being sensitive to other people's goals and displaying arrogance or ego when not appropriate. Sometimes, displaying ego

If you are allowed to explore and look for something new, then the discovery process is probably the most fun and exciting of all.

absolutely helps, but sometimes it will crush you, so you need to be politically aware and develop a radar. Every environment and every situation in your entire career has its own form of social and political dynamics. You need to be a careful observer of the lay of the land as you navigate; otherwise, you could stumble and find you have invested a lot of time, maybe for nothing. That's a big one. A lot of kids fall into that trap. Sometimes, they feel entitled to get somewhere faster than they do, but they need to earn their way. They also need to be aware the world is neither benevolent nor completely evil. You need to understand the political and social landscape before you start asserting yourself.

I read that you actually started as an assistant for *Saturday Night Live*. What insights did working at *SNL* give you, if any, into what you do today?

The funny thing about *Saturday Night Live* is whatever their formula is, it has proven the test of time, hasn't it? It is about improvisation to some degree, rapid prototyping of comedy, and little story experiences, and it's about how to be really creative in a short amount of time. Weekly, they are able to create scripts and scenarios where they take great talent and new talent, and cook this formula quickly, put on a live broadcast to millions, and pull it off, week after week after week. *SNL* represents the ability to rapid prototype and channel brilliant entertainment.

They produce innovative comedy in an innovative way. What *Saturday Night Live* doesn't offer is a super high-fidelity set and quality photography; it can't do that because of the speed needed to crank out the show. What it is, though, is a great experience. They measure out what they can and cannot do in a week, and that is what's going on right now, particularly where I am in Silicon Valley. Companies here are very much focused on rapid prototyping ideas. Trying them out, sketching them up, pitching them out, even prototyping them out, as fast as they possibly can to see what catches.

Sometimes, people get hung up on a singular focus for years before they realize it's not in sync with an audience, and they lose time. When I worked on *SNL*, I didn't really think about rapid prototype; it was just something fun to do. Today, though, much entertainment comes out of real-time graphics and even app-based innovations, which requires the ability to give the audience a rapid experience.

One big debate seems to be where to draw the line between real footage and digital effects. How do you find a balance between the two?

It's a matter of logistics. Sometimes, it's not possible to mount something real within the scope of a large film. Indie films can do it because crews are smaller, and footprints and expenses are smaller. On a big movie, you can burn through hundreds of thousands of dollars a day on a stage or location. Locations can cause lots of problems because you can't control things like weather, light, the sun, and so forth. There is a lot of risk if the location doesn't turn out to be friendly, so sometimes people stay inside with stages where they can control everything and, if needed, shoot for 24 hours a day. That's why movies have become more expensive; the risk is just too large.

With indie films or even just something small, there's no reason not to go on location. At that point, it's more what the script needs. If the script demands something fantastic, well,

that's a different matter. But if it's just a pragmatic decision, a smaller film should try to use real locations because the production value will be richer.

It's easy to see innovation is important to you. Do you innovate to push your imagination, or do you innovate as a process to tackle your current projects?

Both. These days, I tend to be driven by trying to create a new experience. I do feel like it is difficult to get that in films lately because there is a certain redundancy of grandeur going on in big blockbuster movies. But if the audience doesn't feel like the experience is original and great, I don't want to invest in the immense amount of work it takes. If they feel like, "Oh this movie is similar to this movie and that movie," then it's just a job. And it's a difficult job to have, to never see family and friends because of the travel and the ridiculous hours. If the audience becomes oversaturated with that kind of content, then I personally want to pursue a new format where the experiences can be appreciated. While I am working on movies and designing ideas, I am even more motivated to make a mark in augmented reality because it is like resetting the clocks on visual effects.

The augmented reality platform shows great potential even though I deal with almost the same set of problems and goals as those in visual effects. You want to combine real-world footage with elements not from that world, whether it's computer graphics or otherwise. The desire to blend content in stylistic or realistic ways is just the beginning of compositing computer graphics; there is a long road ahead to include not just objects but characters, places, and props seamlessly. To me, augmented reality is the most exciting platform and one that directly leverages what has been learned from visual effects except we are at the beginning again; it's a reset. It's a very interesting one because the goals are going to be different, more experiential and more based on the audience. Rather than a singular vision that pushes something

passively at the audience (which can be a fantastic experience, don't get me wrong), augmented reality has the potential to allow people to become immersed in content and participate in the experience. The outcome is unpredictable. Sometimes, it may be cheesy, pre-canned, and commercial, but then there is going to be some breakthrough stuff. There will be the *Citizen Kane* of augmented reality. Some people are still waiting for the *Citizen Kane* of gaming, and I believe it is close, but augmented reality will be closer. And I am much more interested in the potential of that, a new audience, still open-minded, not overexposed.

For example, when I was working on *Jupiter Ascending*, I had a lot of collaborative and creative freedom. I enjoyed myself. These types of directors are not making normal or factory movies, but really bizarre ones, so the experience is unpredictable and satisfying. Most movies are commercial and formulaic, which makes the experience just a job.

What do you find more exciting: the discovery or the use of new visual effects techniques in films and other media?

Discovery. If you are allowed to explore and look for something new, then the discovery process is probably the most fun and exciting of all. It's the prototyping process. Once you arrive at something unique, which requires a lot of skill, it's a different type of experience. Some people enjoy the application part, so I am not disparaging it, but I personally like the discovery part.

I read you are interested in hybrid entertainment. What is hybrid entertainment, and what do you hope to achieve in this area?

There are some convergences between gaming technology innovations, film graphics, and photography that will show up across the next three to five years. I think there will be a number of new types of media that will be fun to participate, watch, and interact with. These hybrid experiences can take place on television,

mobile devices, and through glasses, and the talent involved in each of these areas will crisscross. What's fun is the co-mingling between science and science fiction; science in entertainment is cool. You can navigate back and forth between science and entertainment when you are talking about visualization. So we need to master these technologies, which could range from something primitive to something that's completely realistic and immersive, like being in a fantasy world meeting *Avatar* characters or understanding what the landscape of Afghanistan looks like from a simulator in Nevada. There is so much cool stuff going on. Simulation and visualization offer many avenues to an artist or engineer.

Tell us about FLOAT, the company you created.

After *Speed Racer*, I took a break from the film industry, and a number of friends from film had gotten into the technology sector by way of the game industry. So, they got into high-level research and development labs at companies like Electronic Arts, then left there for Apple, Microsoft, Google, and places like that around here in the Bay area. I had been getting bored with movies, and some former associates asked if I wanted to get involved with new types of interfaces. They called them "human interfaces," and nobody knew exactly what that meant. If you follow what is going on with smart and sensor technologies, you know there are a lot of inputs, such as various machine-vision-type of technologies, that people are trying to utilize to drive content and data. Almost anything can be a driver of a content experience, and content doesn't have to be entertainment; it can be anything such as visualization. I had a friend who called and said, "I'm the creative director of a secret lab at Microsoft, and what we are trying to do is change the entire paradigm of interacting with your computer. We want to move beyond the mouse and look at all different types of inputs and voice, gesture, and touch. You enjoy

visualization and like prototyping; would you be interested in working on that?" Of course, that sounded cool, so I formed a company called FLOAT to work with Microsoft, and this lab in particular, to try to push the envelope of using sensors on a project now known as Kinect (the earliest name was Project Natal).

We tried to figure out what the average person standing before the sensor might want as any type of content outcome. They were curious about gaming themes and things like how can a character walk around a world, walk through complex spaces, pick up objects, and do things in a virtual space. What does a person standing or sitting in front of a computer do that drives these characters through, which seems simple when you have an XBOX controller in your hand, but is highly complex, especially when you're an average person with no knowledge of what you're supposed to do? How do you compel a person to move the right way? What kinds of motions should people do? Should they wave flags like they are waving in a boat? Or should they do something more expressive like some sort of echo or analogy to the thing they want to happen? There were other things like how do I move a camera in a complex way. What if I wanted, in a scientific visualization, to navigate around by just sitting in front of a sensor? And then what if I wanted to start layering commands with my voice; how do I let users know they achieved something or they are close to their goals? What feedback systems are needed?

So, FLOAT is a company dedicated to things related to sensors and touch devices, which grew to looking at the whole living room, which has always been Microsoft's goal. How do you create a connected living room in which all people are known in the room, every person with a device is connected to everyone else with a device, all devices relate to the television set, and the entire grouping relates to

an array of content and experiences? All of this could be brought forth at their will and instantaneously, in an intuitive, intelligent, smart way. The current pursuit of many of these tech companies is about learning about people in their homes, which sounds creepy, but is for the intent of creating smart and insightful services for what you want and what you think you want.

The notion of artificial intelligence (AI) and fake AI is centered around learning about you, your household, how your household works, who likes what when, and who is in the room. Certainly, there are some aspects that could be misconstrued in a menacing way, and I am a person who is very concerned about that. Still, I am interested on sensors and human interfaces from the point of view of the powerful, creative experience a person can have. Because you can touch your content and interact with your content the way you can't with your television, which is passive and pushing content at the viewer. FLOAT is a stealth company, if you will, with confidential projects. Outside of the spirit of our past work, I can't be any more specific. We have explored various products from game-like experiences to analytic-like experiences. Right now, it's driven by experiences, exploration, and prototyping.

I think you are going to see a big bang with regard to augmented experiences that will begin with a lot of meaningless noise. The noise will take some time to sort through, but eventually you will see something so remarkable—the next plateau of innovations—in that industry. But the first round is going to seem typically American in its over consumer-oriented focus to the point where you may feel sick, like being spammed to death through augmented reality glasses. Still, I believe that scenario will be followed by remarkable, new innovations that will enlighten us to a more immersive experience in gaming, industries, movies, education, everything.

John Gaeta is an Academy Award-winning visual effects designer best known for his work on *The Matrix* film trilogy, where he advanced the effects methods known as "bullet time," "virtual cinematography," and "photo anime."

Since working with the Wachowski siblings on *The Matrix* movies and *Speed Racer*, he has been experimenting with motion sensing technology (Kinect) as a way of converging movies and interactive media into a more compelling, mind-bending, and unifying experience.

In 2009, Gaeta founded a new type of development entity called FLOAT (hybrid) and serves as acting chief creative officer. FLOAT innovates and prototypes compelling interfaces between audiences and many types of media including television, gaming, search, social, and augmented reality. Gaeta believes that there are threads in today's most exciting technologies that are leading toward a fundamental leap forward in the way people interact and immerse within all media.



◀ www.floathybrid.com/



◀ www.dmacc.edu/ciweek

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