



OPPORTUNITY **SCREAMS**

Unlocking Hearts and Minds
in Today's Idea Economy

Tom Asacker



Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.

Paramount Market Publishing, Inc.
950 Danby Road, Suite 136
Ithaca, NY 14850
www.paramountbooks.com

Telephone: 607-275-8100; 888-787-8100

Facsimile: 607-275-8101

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*I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself
to be able to give birth to a dancing star.*

I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra:*
A Book for All and None



Introduction

*The world is all gates, all opportunities,
strings of tension waiting to be struck.*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

What's on your mind? What's bugging you? Whatever it is, for your sake—and for those unwilling or unable to change—come alive and do something about it! *Inspired action is the key to unlocking the doors to opportunity, growth, and happiness.* The inventor David Levy referred to it as the curse effect: “Whenever I hear someone curse, it's a sign to invent something.” Perhaps that someone is you and that “cursing” is resonating between your ears. Don't let those persistent screams irritate you and drain your life and passion. Use them to fuel you and drive you forward.

Opportunity Doesn't Knock

Opportunity abounds, but you won't hear it knocking. Today opportunity screams behind the closed doors of convention, confusion, and fear. The future belongs to those unwilling to accept the stifling status quo, to those who stay excited, puzzled, and surprised. It belongs to those child-like people who are constantly asking questions and wondering how things work, to the geniuses.

That's right, geniuses!

How do you know when you're in the presence of genius? You witness a passionate, wide-eyed maniac who actually believes she can change things. I've been in the presence of genius. It's impossible to miss.

gen·ius [jeen-yuhs]: a person who strongly influences for good or ill the character, conduct, or destiny of a person, place, or thing.

Geniuses don't want to be products of their environment; they want their environment to be products of them. They are not observers and critics. They're dreamers and doers. They explore and create and, with their passion and daring, move us all forward.

A genius is a grade school teacher who stretches the "system" and inspires her students to greatness. She's a consultant who visualizes a radically new process and makes it come to life for the benefit of her clients and their risk-averse organizations.

A genius is an entrepreneur who feels the fear, but, like Sir Richard Branson, exclaims, "Screw it. Let's do it!" and pushes forward with a bold new idea. He's a leader who says, "What corporate doesn't know won't hurt them," and initiates a skunk works project that ends up changing the direction of the company.

Geniuses are *misfits*. Like a pair of tight fitting pants, they're uncomfortable and they often make others uncomfortable.

Knowledge seldom leads to transformation. Rather, it is discomfort with the current reality that provokes change, and with it those unique experiences that inform and inspire us.

As the Dalai Lama put it, “Easy times are the enemy, they put us to sleep. Adversity is our friend, it wakes us up.” Just ask the overweight, middle-aged person who has recently experienced a heart attack.

This Book is Dangerous

It won't give you a heart attack, but it may give you *restless mind syndrome*. If you sincerely consider its message and practice its principles it will transform the way you look at the world. It will become a mounting scream in your brain, pleading for you to take a chance and do interesting things. It will pester you, relentlessly, “What are you doing? Why are you doing it? Is it exciting? Are you proud of it? Is that the best that you can do?”

Will you become successful after reading this little book? That depends on how you define success. This is *not* a get rich quick, persuade others to your way of thinking type of handbook. It calls for less coaxing and more meaningful action. It demands that you get outside of your comfort zone and do something special, something *extraordinary*.

After studying and speaking about the marketplace for the past 20 years, and teasing apart what works and what doesn't, I've discovered one universal truth: to flourish in a rapidly changing world you need to open your eyes, reframe your beliefs and usher in a constant stream of fresh insights.

Open your eyes. Ideas spring from awareness. Awareness will lift you from the shallows of mediocrity into the full and exciting sea of possibilities.

It's all Connected

I can still remember standing by my father's side at his little service station watching him break his back under his customers' cars—sweat pouring from his brow, black grease permanently embedded under his nails and into the cracks of his palms—only to see him wipe his hands as clean as possible, rest one gently on a concerned customer's shoulder, and calmly assure her that everything was okay. It was just a loose bolt or something. “And please,” he'd say holding up his hands. “Put your wallet away. It was no big deal.”

You know what? It was a big deal. It was the biggest of deals. And it has taken me far too long to appreciate the lesson he was trying to teach me: It's all connected. Transparent, honest, caring relationships bring meaning, happiness and growth to your business and to your life.

Integrity of Purpose

My dad loved cars, but not as an end; as a means. Cars were his way to connect with people. He was driven by their needs, not by his ego or the noise of the competitive environment. His garage ended up turning into a sort of sanctuary, where people from miles around would bring their problems, their favorite desserts, and their life stories. And my dad saw it as his purpose to take care of them all; to be their advocate and trusted advisor.

Whenever he thought he could use his connections and expertise to help save them time, money, or aggravation, he did it. He went deeper and deeper into his relationships, adding new products, sourcing new suppliers, doing anything that would add happiness to their lives.

Alas, my dad never did become “rich” by today’s standards. But by focusing on what mattered most—incessantly and creatively adding significance and meaning to people’s lives—he achieved more wealth than any person I’ve met in my thirty plus years in business.

Walt Disney had it figured out as well. His mantra was, “I don’t make movies to make money. I make money to make movies.” Do you see the difference? Disney’s mission was to create first-rate entertainment and with it the happiness it brought to his audiences. He used money to continuously reinvent and realize that mission.

Most people do it the other way around; they create missions in order to make more money. What about you? What’s your mission? Why do you make money?

If you’ve been putting off being passionate about your work in order to make a lot of money, now may be the time for you to make a change. The business of making money simply to make more money is quickly coming to an end.

The future is not in making a buck; it’s in making connections and making a difference. It’s about being interesting, creative, and vital. As Goethe wrote, “What is important in life is life, and not the result of life.”

The Unifying Principle

A wise Rabbi once said, “If I am I because you are you. And you are you because I am I. Then I am not I and you are not you.” It may sound like double-talk, but the teacher’s message is a profoundly important one: we are not separate. We define

each other. We are fronts and backs of each other—producers/consumers; government/citizens; actors/audience; manufacturers/suppliers; consultants/clients; teachers/students; designers/users, management/talent; you/me. In fact, you only know who you are in terms of the other.

Unfortunately, we tell ourselves a very different story. We have this notion that we're separate and that we can build our future through a series of distinct, disconnected activities—clever marketing to attract an audience; persuasive sales and follow-up service to gain revenues and deal with problems; motivation to keep the troops in line and moving.

The truth is everything and everyone is connected. In order to describe who you are you must describe your behavior; what you do. And to describe what you do, you must describe it—and all activities associated with it—in *relationship* to your audience, to your community.

What you are and how you evolve is what your community is and how it evolves. It's integrative, interactive, and iterative. You, therefore, are one, interdependent system of behavior. You are not a separate thing.

Think of it this way: If you lean a bunch of sticks against each other, they stand up because they support each other. Take one away and the others become less stable, or they fall. Easy to understand, but, like the childhood game “pick-up sticks,” extremely complex and challenging to tease apart.

The hard work of value co-creation—viscerally understanding the relationships between the sticks and strategically connecting them

to each other—is essential to unlocking the Doors to opportunity and achieving sustained success.

Stop and consider carefully whether your daily activities are propping up and supporting your audience, or adding even more noise and confusion to their busy lives. Are you strategically creating value, or are you pitching, broadcasting messages, and defending the status quo?

The key to a successful relationship lies out there, in the hopes, dreams, and real lives of your audience. Because what you do is not a separate, promotable thing. It's a *co-created* reality, experienced and enhanced with others.

Bringing Your Passion to Life

Have you ever heard the expression, “Do what you love and the money will follow?” There is a ring of truth to it, and it goes something like this: If you love it, you'll be open-eyed and curious about it. You'll study it, learn about it, and spend more time doing it. And all of this passion and attention (love) for what ever it is that you do will make you successful.

Passion is extremely important in business today, as well as in just about every other aspect of life. Certainly those who truly care and are genuinely excited about their professions will have an edge over others. But success in the marketplace has little to do with what *you* want.

Success is achieved by using your unique skills and enthusiasm to add value and happiness to the lives of *others*, by being a unique source of what turns *them* on.

The longing to improve life is the heart and soul of differentiation and success in today's marketplace. The challenge is to leverage your uniqueness and continuously innovate for their benefit over time. Or to put it another way: Do what they love, *with* what you love, and the money is sure to follow.

Real Wealth

Think about why you do what you do each day. Is it simply to grow your financial wealth, so that someday you can escape from people and relax with your grill and your pool, your gadgets and games? Or do you see each day for what it truly is; an opportunity to add a spark of meaning, caring and passion to life and to the lives of others?

Are you simply tolerating today, so that you can eventually arrive at a better tomorrow? Or do you realize that today *is* your life, and that it's the quality of your trip with others that really matters?

We all want peace of mind, this much is clear. And we believe that it comes from accumulating wealth, which it does. But it doesn't come from the illusory kind of wealth, the kind that fluctuates with economic conditions and life's circumstances. It comes from real wealth, the wealth of trusted friendships and caring relationships. The wealth of collaboration and creativity that flourishes and brings forth joy and comfort, in good times and in bad.

The Marketplace is Moving

Enlightened people are moving with the changing times. A passionate few have their shoulders pressed firmly against the

demoralizing status quo and are pushing forward for the benefit of us all.

George Bernard Shaw had it right, “This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

The old obsession with wealth and fame—with winning and losing—is being replaced with purpose and contribution.

I’m afraid this book can’t help you with integrity and purpose, I wish it could. But I can promise you this: If you are honest with yourself and with others, and you accept my premise that success comes from a dedication to working diligently to improve the lives of others, it will teach you how to bring your purpose and passion to life.

A Framework for Success

We all want to be excited. We all want to be winners. More importantly, we want to be uplifted by a worthy ideal. We want to be involved, treated with respect and recognized for our contributions. We want to make a difference. But here’s the rub. The biggest issue in our businesses, work lives, and volunteer efforts is that we’re disorganized.

We don’t have a perceptual lens to bring the marketplace clearly into view. We have neither a unifying perspective that inspires us, nor a framework to guide our actions. Our notions of the way the world works, of what we’re trying to accomplish, and of how to

go about it are erroneous. We end up bouncing from one tactic to another, looking for shortcuts and tossing things against the wall to see if they'll stick.

We spend our days pickled in a world of parity, marinating in minutiae while our ideas and unbridled spirit shrivel up and die.

Grab yourself by the collar and yank yourself off of your comfortable, well-worn path and onto one brimming with excitement and buzzing with opportunity.

You are sitting on a rare opportunity, but you must be systematic in how you take advantage of it. It's how you frame the situation that will dictate your outcome.

A New Mindset

Opportunity Screams is not an improved set of tactics; it's a new way of thinking designed to open your eyes to new possibilities. In the chapters that follow, you will be introduced to a lens for viewing and seizing opportunity that most people are unaware of.

It is not a formula. Formulas are rules for followers designed to produce sameness. They limit and obscure opportunities to create something unique.

There are no rules in this book, or in the marketplace of ideas. But there are patterns that you need to pay attention to. *Opportunity Screams* will reveal those patterns and present a framework that will provide clarity, stretch your mind and empower you to bring your purpose and passion to life. It will help you put together ideas and information in unique and powerful combinations that nobody else has done before.

The goal of this book is *not* to defend the framework against all criticism. Rather it's to present a road map and various routes to inspire and energize you, to help unleash the power of ideas and transform them into meaningful actions. It is not a sure-fire, fill-in-the-blanks algorithm. It's a way of seeing and evaluating ideas that will increase your probability of a successful outcome and get you there more quickly.

Once you are in the habit of using it, it will help you deconstruct and demystify the diverse patterns of the ever-shifting marketplace kaleidoscope, as well as reveal the rationale for various successes and failures.

More importantly, the framework will inspire confidence and risk-taking. It will drive you to understand the design of your strategy and embrace *your* uniqueness—that powerful emotional idea that distinguishes you and will motivate others.

The essence of the framework is based on how people in a culturally mature, choice-driven marketplace perceive the world, and how they make decisions and recommendations. The *spirit* of this little book, however, lies in the great photographer Cecil Beaton's impassioned plea:

“Be daring, be different, be impractical, be anything that will assert integrity of purpose and imaginative vision against the play-it-safers, the creatures of the commonplace, the slaves of the ordinary.”

Everyone has an agenda and an opinion. Everyone has their reasons why this or that won't work. And the result of all of this griping and second-guessing is that nothing happens.

For me, trying something new and making things happen is what life is all about. Action is character. You are what you do.

I Never Met a Metaphor I Didn't Like

In our current world of information overload, good metaphors and analogies can provide clarity and guidance during challenging situations. They create new ways of seeing, which lead to new ways of being. One mental image is the concept of locked doors and keys.

In the framework that follows, the locked Doors represent the mental states that must be motivated in others to attract their attention, sustain their interest, and inspire them to act.

The Locks represent *your* limiting beliefs—the mental *barriers* that prevent you from being original and connecting in interesting and meaningful ways.

The Keys are, literally, the key. They'll refresh your tired eyes, reframe your reality and help you affect others. The Keys will unlock the Doors to opportunity.

Each Key has a unique shape, or Design, which is essential to unlocking a particular Door. Use the Keys and embrace the spirit of their specific Designs, and you will increase your chances of marketplace success. Ignore them and it will slow you down, cost you more time and money than necessary, and, most likely, frustrate the living hell out of you.

Door One: Engagement

How do we create awareness *and* engage very busy people?
Unlocking the first Door—the Door to Engagement—is about

being captivating, so that the people who can benefit from what you do become enchanted and compelled to investigate further.

If you've invested in something and are passionate about it, then you should at the very least be able to get people's attention and interest. I can assure you, however, that it is not as simple as it may seem.

The brain is a lazy piece of meat that conserves energy by taking the safe path, following routines and making predictions about the future based on past experiences. It sees what it wants to see and does what it *feels* like doing, regardless of what you think it should. And it's getting lazier and more myopic as today's culture of distraction adapts to searching, clicking, scanning, and media snacking.

We live in a highly filtered, short message world buzzing with people who are anxious about their livelihood; confused and tired of conflicting information; and bedazzled by technology and media. To be discovered by these overwhelmed brains and connect with them in a meaningful way, you must go beyond the ordinary and engage them with an unconventional and carefully considered approach.

Door Two: Interest

Once you engage people, you must strategically make use of that opportunity to signal meaning and value. By doing so, you'll motivate them to dig deeper and *maintain* their interest.

Unlocking the Door to Interest is about drawing *curious people* towards you by creating something valuable and memorable. It must be something that connects deeply with their desires and

sense of self; something that will, ultimately, move them to action.

Unlocking the first Door, and engaging people with a unique approach, may temporarily shine a light on your creativity and your offering. Opening the second Door and sustaining their interest, however, is about releasing the grip of your ego and desires, and turning that light back around on *them*.

Door Three: Belief

Belief is the confident expectation of something or someone. Nothing happens without belief. So what engenders belief in an era of mistrust and cynicism?

Unlocking the Door to Belief is about being *real*, so that *interested people* become customers—or fans, donors, users, voters, patients, clients, followers, et al.

You create belief by demonstrating unique value, not by talking about it. You create belief by being human and passionate in your approach to the world. You create belief by making what you do vivid and tangible, and by helping your audience see your idea brought to life in *their* world for the benefit of people like them.

That's it. Your audience is engaged, they're interested, and most importantly, they believe. They believe in your imaginative vision. They believe in your integrity of purpose. They believe in the special meaning and value you'll add to their lives, and to the lives of people like them. They believe in you and your idea.

But will your audience look forward to seeing you? Will they proffer advice to help you improve what you do and keep you

ahead of the pack? Will they refer their family and friends? Will they continue to believe?

They will if you continue to unlock their Doors with emotion, passion and daring creativity, and keep them engaged and interested. Doing so will complete the pulsating and ever-expanding circle called relationship, and reinforce your audience's decision to believe in you and make you a part of their lives.

There Are No Shortcuts

There are only three Doors, but there are no shortcuts. You must put in the time and effort to unlock each one to have any chance of perpetual success; success that builds upon itself. You'll be happy to know, however, that no special expertise is required. And distinctions like age, gender and profession are irrelevant. You *just* have to be a genius and have the creativity and guts to move forward, to continuously surprise, engage and inspire people with new and valuable ideas.

Given the rapidly changing times we live in today, the opportunity to touch people's lives in interesting and meaningful ways is virtually limitless. What stops most people and organizations is a lack of purpose, creative idleness, and plain, old-fashioned fear. They're driven by numbers and angst, and have fallen morally and creatively asleep.

Don't let those things happen to you. Wake up and seize this opportunity to experience and grow, while others snuggle deeper into their comfy routines. Confront what's in front of you with a clear and flexible mind. Be courageous *and* considered. Spirited

and sensible. Go confidently in the direction of your beliefs and dreams. You'll be happily surprised by what you discover.

At the end of the short chapter about each Door is a list of questions to reflect upon. Within those questions are **highlighted keywords**. Type a highlighted word into the search box at *www.opportunityscreams.com*, and it will launch a short video on the topic at hand.

Rather than writing a *thick* book, I thought you'd prefer a thin one with the option to dive into more engaging and valuable content when the opportunity best suits you and your team.

Ben Franklin once advised, "Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing about." I say, "Screw it. Do both!"

On to Door One!