



THE
DOMINO
PROJECT

IDEAS THAT SPREAD, WIN.

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/>)

That wasn't expected (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/05/that-wasnt-expected.html>)

May 8, 2018

Sorry about the post in German this morning.

We've identified the problem and while I wish it was a great story about Joseph Beuys and the Fluxus (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Beuys) movement, it's far more benign than that.

I don't expect that this will happen again, and I'm confident that no data was compromised.

We'll keep you posted if there's anything to worry about.

Again, my apologies.

Seth



The apples and oranges problem (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/04/apples-oranges-problem.html>)

April 13, 2018

Books are books. They're made in the same factories, sold in the same stores, usually by the same publishers.

Which is absurd. Because the relevant and interesting insight gets lost if you look at books as a category.

There's not a lot in common between a \$200 medical textbook and a 99 cent Kindle romance disposable.

The same way that a survey that shows how humans can earn significant income tries to compare Kareem Abdul-Jabbar with Evan the YouTube toy kid isn't of much help.

Bernadette found us this big data study

(<https://epjdatascience.springeropen.com/articles/10.1140/epjds/s13688-018-0135-y>) on the book industry. Alas, the authors missed just about all the nuance because they failed to do more than a cursory sorting within the industry. Mostly they determined that bestsellers sell a lot more books than books that aren't bestsellers. Not a lot you can do with that data except try to make your book a bestseller if your goal is to sell a lot of books.

The bestseller list itself makes no sense. It's an amalgam of many different buyers buying many different books for many different reasons. Most of the books aren't substitutes for each other, and most of the buyers arrive and leave the market at random times. It's not Top 40 radio.

More useful: Figure out if you're an apple or an orange. Are you an ex-President or a biographer, a one-hit wonder or a professional writer?

For example, there are reliable paths to follow if you're working in a specific genre, like romance. And different paths for a different genre, like cookbooks. Dig deep to see the well lit path (<https://growthlab.com/how-to-self-publish-a-book-and-double-revenue/>) that a self-published business author took, vs. the TV-driven approach a celebrity might follow.

The takeaway: If you can find a category, you can learn from it. But the broader the category, the less you're going to learn.



Two reasons book covers matter (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/03/two-reasons-book-covers-matter.html>)

March 5, 2018

Yes, in fact, people do judge a book by the title and the cover.

I think there are two reasons, not completely related:

1. Most people don't read, not even the books they actually buy. As a result, the title and the cover are often the best chance you have to make your point, to telegraph what you came to say, to set the stage for the first thirty pages.
2. If someone reads a book and wants to recommend it, does the cover and the title make that easier or more difficult? Is it easy to talk about, pronounce, share? Does it embarrass or shame the recommender or the recipient? What does the look and feel remind us of?

Eat, Pray, Love was a magical cover and title combination. *All Marketers are Liars* was a terrible one. (My fault, not my publisher's).

The move to tiny screens and busier lives has had many consequences. One of them is that we now use an index-card sized bucket to hold a lifetime's worth of ideas, memes, memories and connections. It can't possibly fit.

So, all that's left is work to become iconic. Building an icon isn't easy, but in a low-information, high-speed world, it's your best bet.



Honest signals (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/02/honest-signals.html>)

February 26, 2018

Today's publication day for **Cat Hoke's new book, A Second Chance.** (<http://www.cathoke.com>)

It's been a long journey, more than a year in the making, and all of us want it to do well.

Tomorrow, when I write about her book on my main blog (<http://www.sethgodin.typepad.com>), thousands of people will show up to the Amazon page, where they will have their first impression of the book.

How will they decide? Who will choose to buy it, who will push off the decision to later, and who will walk away for good?

Since Amazon has become the primary point of exposure for new books, and since books still drive so much of our common conversation, it's an essential question.

Unlike the bookstore, all the books on Amazon look pretty much the same. And thus, we're on hyper-alert for the small things, the little signals that tell us that this one is worth more of our time or money.

There are three obvious signals available:

1. the cover
2. the reviews
3. the bestseller rank

And of course, along the way, ‘growth hackers’ (using the word generously, in quotes) have tried to game the system, using dishonest signals to capture more than a fair share of attention and trust. Readers, once burned, are more careful than ever.

Yes, it’s pretty simple to game a book to bestseller status, for an hour anyway. And, while it’s not as easy as it was, there are still plenty of ways to game the reviews.

But these are the only signals we’ve got in this retail setting. If you pre-ordered the Kindle edition of Cat’s book (thank you!) you now have the book on your device. Cat and I would be truly grateful if you’d post an honest review today (it’s not an accident that Amazon puts “Verified Purchase” next to some reviews—turning questionable signals back into honest ones.)

As I’ve written previously, a book is far more than a method for monetizing an idea. In fact, in 2018, it’s a pretty lousy way to monetize an idea. But Cat’s work with Defy, the work of her team, her volunteers, the EITs... all of it is amplified by this book, by this artifact that can be shared, read and cherished.

Thank you for the work you’ve done to help support Defy’s work. It’s already making a difference. Donors have stepped up with significant financial contributions, new volunteers have joined the network and people’s lives are changing. Every day.

Wish us luck this week. But with your help, we’re already making a ruckus. Thank you.



Stolen ideas (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/02/stolen-ideas.html>)

February 21, 2018

The paradox of non-fiction book publishing (and I’d stretch it to include popular fiction as well) has two components:

1. Authors steal to write.
2. And the writing they do gets stolen.

It’s easy to get up in arms about the second, but essential to embrace the first.

One can't write without using the ideas, metaphors, styles, tropes, processes, concepts, examples and successes that came before. The writing would be incoherent, it wouldn't resonate with anyone and failure would ensue.

It can't be 100% original, but it often rhymes with what came before.

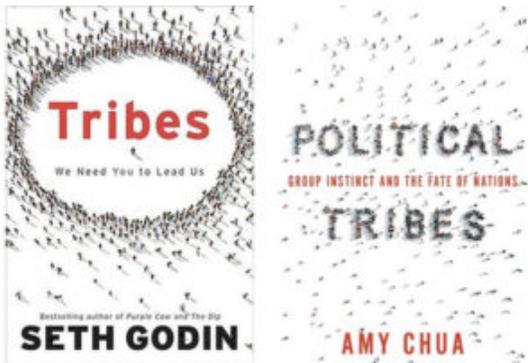
The converse of this, of course, is that if you do good work, the books and articles and conversations that follow will be inspired by (and stolen from) the work you do.

You won't be acknowledged, and you'll be quoted or misquoted. Or paraphrased.

If you're successful.

If you're not, you'll discover that your work is merely invisible.

Here's the cover for a book I did with Penguin about a decade ago, alongside the cover of a new book, yes, published by Penguin. I ran into the artist who did the work on my cover, and neither he nor I was informed. If I were him, having drawn all those little people with shadows, I'd be pretty annoyed. Giving him credit doesn't hurt anyone.



([https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-](https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/tribes-compared.jpg)

[content/uploads/2018/02/tribes-compared.jpg](https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/tribes-compared.jpg))

Bad form aside, this is not only part of the deal, it's the most important part of the deal. Culture is nothing but a sedimentary layering of ideas, each contributing to the next. That's what we signed up for.

Steal and be stolen from. That's how ideas work.



Too much static (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/02/too-much-static.html>)

February 9, 2018

The 500-year-old publishing model is based on two fundamental needs:

1. printing a lot of books at once is much cheaper than printing a few at a time.
2. bookstores are the backbone of the industry, and all issues of timing, pricing and promotion should serve their needs.

Of course, neither of these is true any more.

So, why publish a book all at once, all or nothing, with a static price and static distribution?

Two weeks ago, Amazon made a significant mistake with Cat Hoke's new book, *A Second Chance*. (<https://www.bit.ly/CatHoke>)

The book has a pub date of February 26, 2018. In the industry a pub date is sacrosanct. Every store puts the books out on the same day, allowing publishers time to fill the warehouses, prime the pump, do the PR, organize everything, then –boom–.

Well, Amazon, our only retail storefront, screwed up and began shipping pre-orders in January, a month early. They sent hundreds of people an email confirmation, changed the book page, opened the site to reviews, the whole thing.

Long before the Defy team was ready.

We scrambled, and Amazon said it was a glitch and that they'd fix it. That no books would ship. Pub date would be saved.

But of course, they didn't. And so hundreds of books went out, a couple of great reviews got posted and then finally, Amazon turned it back off.

You know what?

It was a good thing.

It was a good thing that at no expense to the author, hundreds of fans and supporters now have a copy of the book. A copy that, especially since no one else can get one, people are happy to talk about. It was a good thing that the reviews are there, making it more compelling to visit the book's page (<https://www.bit.ly/CatHoke>) on Amazon.

On balance, if we could do it again, we'd insist on it!

That got me thinking about all the ways a book launch could become something other than an all or nothing moment with a pub date, a nationwide 'lay down' and all the drama that comes with that.

For example: Books could launch in digital format and then, if certain numbers got hit, the paper version would become available. Or the price could change according to volume schedule set by the publisher. Or there could be windows when limited editions of a book were available, and then, automatically, the format could change. Perhaps the Kindle edition could have multiple variations, an abridged one that's shorter, that one could upgrade to the full one. Or one with notes from early readers included, as edited by the author, etc. Or perhaps Kickstarter could have a way to hook up to the Amazon API and deliver Kindle books automatically when levels are reached.

There are 450 other ideas, some better, many worse. But we won't know as long as the format and the timing and variables aren't even being discussed. Just about every other form of media has been morphed and revolutionized by the digital transformation, but all that's happened in the book world is the loss of the bookstore and the rise of the long tail. (Special shoutout to sites like Wattpad (<https://www.wattpad.com/>) who are trying to take new approaches.)

We can do better than a single book, at a single price, all launched on the same day, particularly if the platforms are built to support it.



The shift is real and it's forever (books by the numbers) **(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/01/shift-real-forever-books-numbers.html>)**

January 29, 2018

Books (and bookstores) have been around for 500 years, and one thing the industry has improved is data gathering. By store, by genre, by format, by author. The data is there... authors can ignore it in their quest to make a ruckus, but the trends are worth knowing about, especially if you're a publisher or work with one.

Mike Shatzkin (https://www.idealogue.com/blog/changing-book-business-seems-flowing-downhill-amazon/#disqus_thread) and the folks behind Bookstat (<http://authorearnings.com/report/january-2018-report-us-online-book-sales-q2-q4-2017/>) know precisely what's going on.

Four highlights:

1. **Amazon sells nearly half the books** sold in the US now. It's only going to keep going that way. Barnes and Noble and other outlets are shrinking quickly.
2. **ebooks account for more than half of all books sold**, and in some genres, it's way more than that. Again, it's only going to keep going in that direction as more genre books shift and outlets disappear. An entire generation of readers is coming along that will encounter books without ever visiting a 'real' bookstore.
3. Self-published and small press books at **low prices dominate unit sales**. You can sell a lot more ebooks for \$3, and if you want to reach a lot of people, that's what's happening.
4. As always, **books have always been a long tail business**, but now more than ever. The bestselling book of the year will likely be read by fewer than 1% of the people in the US. There's no other form of media that's even close to that low. In exchange, though, there are millions (not a typo) of books hanging out at the long tail. Which is fine if you're a reader, but tough if you're a writer.

Most of all, it's worth noting that book sales are lumpy. The overall trends don't matter to a single book or a single author... you only need 10,000 devoted readers to make a living. I expect there will be bestselling hit books for another twenty years. But, we're now living in radically different times, and it doesn't pay to act as if the world hasn't changed.

What does this mean for publishers?

We need publishers. We need them because most authors need financial and moral and organizational support to do the year or five of work necessary to create an important book. And we need them because most authors aren't interested in doing all the hard work necessary to build a permission asset and promotion engine necessary to make it as an author. Readers need them too, because many want a curated, thoughtful book when it's time to buy something.

But publishers can't persist in their *high-volume, low-conviction approach* to the market. It used to work—because shelf space was king, and pumping out plenty of books got you more shelf space which gave you more chances to have more hits. So, why not?

Now, of course, shelf space is free. Literally, figuratively and actually free.

Publishers have to shift to the approach that successful VC (<http://avc.com/2018/01/a-low-volume-high-conviction-high-support-investor/>)s follow. **Low-volume and high-conviction.**

Once they make that commitment, they need to invest the time and money to actually build a permission asset. To connect directly to readers (people like you) instead of merely catering to bookstores. I know I've been saying this for twenty (!) years, but I'm still right.

Build that asset and the quick speed to market and low inventory risk of Amazon become your friend, not your enemy. Amazon doesn't care who wins or loses—they're the casino, they win no matter what. But if you're building a book worth reading, an idea worth sharing, it's important to

pick your audience and ignore everyone else.

Books matter because there's nothing like the experience of quietly engaging with ideas. It makes us better. It creates opportunities for those that hope to invent and share ideas. I hope we don't lose books any time soon.



The power of bulk sales (Building a Book IV) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/01/the-power-of-bulk-sales-building-a-book-iv.html>)

January 17, 2018

A few years ago, I self-published *What To Do When It's Your Turn* (<http://www.yourturn.link>). We now have more than 150,000 copies in print. That's amazing for a book that lists for \$32, is in color and is hardly a traditional business book. It's not sold in stores, and is rarely found on Amazon.

How did it become a bestseller?

The biggest amplifier of the success of the book is the way I chose to price and ship it. More than a third of the book's sales have been to people who bought ten or more copies at a time. Each of these people bought a few, then a few more, then a bunch.

Arithmetic is on the side of the publisher who can embrace the power of bulk sales. When a reader finds that a book resonates, she can invest in buying more copies and give them away. And books that are given away are books that get read.

It's worth pausing for a second to consider the significant shift that this represents. Traditional publishers have always been wary of bulk sales. It's so difficult to figure out that an entire company (our friends at 8CR (<http://www.800ceoread.com>)) is devoted to making it easier. The traditional model is that a bookstore might sell 50 copies of your book. Or that a particularly successful PR match might lead to a TV show or radio appearance that sells 1,000. But the thinking is that the middlemen are stores and media outlets.

But what if instead, the middlemen are your readers and fans?

Traditional bestseller lists work hard to avoid bulk sales. They don't count as 'real' apparently.

But the author's goals are different. The author merely wants to spread the word. *Lists are for groceries.*

Cat Hoke's new book (<https://bit.ly/CatHoke>), *A Second Chance*, is about forgiveness. It's not just a memoir, but a call to action for each of us, a chance to change the way we engage... not just with criminal justice, but with each other.

As the voluntary publishers of her book, we're counting on bulk sales from individuals and organizations to replace the book media that used to exist but is now missing for most authors. By encouraging people to buy five or ten or fifty books for their organizations, we accomplish three things:

1. Most important, we give the reader's organization a new vocabulary. When a team reads a book at the same time, they change in sync. They develop new words, new approaches and new cohesion. I've seen this happen firsthand with *The Dip* and *Purple Cow*.
2. The Proustian magic of the book format carries far more weight than an email or a video can. Handing someone a book is a respectful act, the way to open a door of possibility.
3. Priming Amazon's pump with a significant number of bulk pre-orders ensures that we won't run out of stock on pub date at the end of February.

Here's a preview galley

(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/vd6gxmadvfr0yhy/A%20Second%20Chance%20Preview%20Galley.pdf?dl=0>) of the first thirty pages of the book.

We've donated 20,000 copies of the hardcover to Defy so that every copy sold generates nothing but contribution to their important work. My hope is that Defy's supporters, plus readers of this blog will step up and invest in ten or twenty books for their friends and family. Thanks to Pamela Slim (<http://pamelaslim.com>) and Marketing Over Coffee (<http://www.marketingovercoffee.com/2013/01/10/welcome-seth-godin-fans/>) for getting us started. I know that it's a stretch, particularly for a book you haven't read yet, but I'm hoping the galley will help you see the power of what Cat and her team are building.

You can check out the book (in hardcover and Kindle, and soon audio) here (<https://bit.ly/CatHoke>). Thank you.



The secret to designing a cover (Building a Book III)

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/01/the-secret-to-designing-a-cover-building-a-book-iii.html>)

January 12, 2018

Most books are self-published. Perhaps half are non-fiction.

And the number of self-publishers who miss this secret is astonishing. Here you go:

The purpose of a book cover is to remind you of a book you've read that you liked.

The goal is not to invent a new way to design a book cover.

The goal is not to prove to the world that you have good taste.

And the goal is not to save money by designing it yourself in Microsoft Paint.

The thing is, the eye is discerning. It can instantly tell the difference between the real thing and something that's almost the real thing.

I had the privilege of working with our Creative Director, Alex Peck, in designing the cover for Cat Hoke's new book (<https://www.bit.ly/CatHoke>). ([bit.ly/CatHoke](https://www.bit.ly/CatHoke))

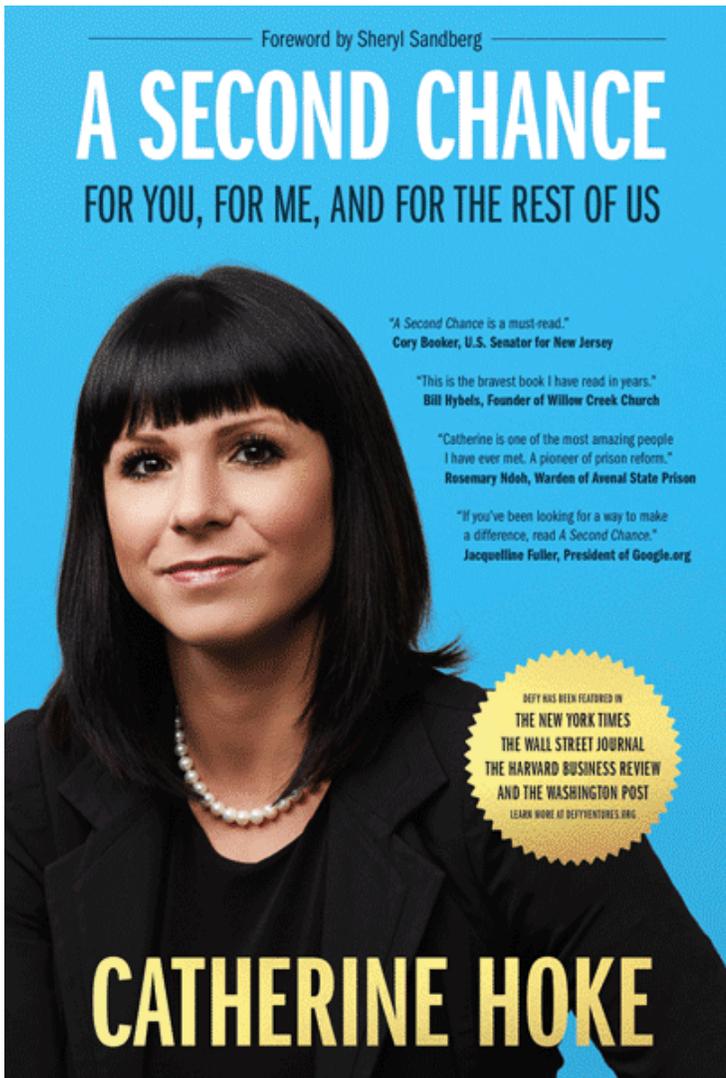
Alex is a craftsman. And a designer. He understands the power of design thinking, and always begins with, "what's it for?"

In the case of Cat's book, the what's it for is simple: The purpose of the cover is to establish quite clearly that this is a book of substance, by a professional, a woman with something important to say.

In the book world, this is communicated NOT with cutting edge fonts and colors, but with nuance. With the patina of experience. With 100 tiny adjustments, with line spacing, shading, shadows, stickers, emblems and embellishments.

It's painstaking but it's worth it.

Here are just a few of the iterations that Alex went through:



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp->

content/uploads/2018/01/ASecondChance_Cover.gif)

The book is being printed and comes out in late February. If you want to see the final cover, here it is (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/0999669508/?tag=permissionmarket>).



Does it pay to own a small bookstore? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2018/01/does-it-pay-to-own-a-small-bookstore.html>)

January 7, 2018

A student asked this question. My answer:

...it's a bit like asking if it pays to be a poet. The answer is, "it depends."

It certainly doesn't pay to be a poet who only makes money from a few journals who pay a few dollars a poem.

But it might pay to be Bob Dylan.

All an elliptical way of saying, in my opinion, at the scale you're at, you can't make a profit in the way you hope.

But that doesn't mean you can't sell books. You might need to sell baskets of books (for gifts) and memberships in book clubs (for connection) and coffee to go with the book (because—caffeine and community).

The books are an excuse to have a business, but they're not a business.

Of course there are exceptions, but they tend to be real estate dependent and at a much larger scale.

I think the same thing is true for “does it pay to write a book.”

Not like it used to. Not like it should.

But writing a book might be the seed that you can grow into reputation and influence and connection. It might be the chance you need to discover the challenges that others need your help with. And it might merely be joyful.

Commercializing the thing that doesn't lend itself to making a profit merely makes you sad.



Building a book (part 2) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2017/12/building-a-book-part-2.html>)

December 29, 2017

Amazon is it.

There are now two channels for non-fiction books in the USA.

There used to be 4,000.

The second channel is “special sales.” This means sales to organizations, sales at events, sales through your team. It means, most of all, using the book as a method to spread the word.

The first channel, as I’ve already mentioned, is Amazon. For many business books, it’s more than 70% of the total retail sales of a book. *That’s up from 1% about twenty years ago.*

Most publishers still act as if the dog is the universe of retail bookstores and the tail is Amazon. That a book needs to be scheduled and optimized and rolled out to the retail ecosystem, and Amazon sales are part of what follows.

With the book we’re doing for Defy, though, we didn’t have the resources or the team to build that sort of on-the-ground rollout. So instead, we’re going all in with Amazon. The hardcover and the Kindle edition are the whole bet.

[An aside: I love booksellers. I shop at real bookstores often. I think they’re priceless. I wish everyone would visit one every day, and buy more than coffee when they did. But, alas, the public has made it clear that, for the kind of books I write and publish, the bus has already left the station.]

[Another aside: I’m pausing here, remembering all the years my mom ran the bookstore at the Albright-Knox in Buffalo, and my talks at the American Bookseller Association conference, and book signings at bookstores large and small. A four-hundred year tradition continues, books (particularly kids books and gift books and novels) will be handsold for years to come. But for many categories like this, Amazon is it.]

This brings us to Shawn Coyne’s rule of 10,000: The job of the publisher is to get the first 10,000 books into the world, to prime the pump. After that, the book (and thus the author, through his or her work) do the rest.

We think we can do that with the Amazon platform (and your help). It’s not everything a full-service publisher can do, but we hope it will be enough.

Cat Hoke’s book, *A Second Chance* (<https://bit.ly/CatHoke>), is now officially on-sale at Amazon.

The elegant, powerful landing page was built for us by Zach Obront at Book in a Box (<https://bookinabox.com/>). Zach and his team are bringing a new approach and a new attitude to the creation and publication of non-fiction books. By leveraging the power of a single platform, they’re making it easier for people without the experience Alex Peck and I have to build books. Thanks, Zach, for being so generous and volunteering your time and expertise on Cat’s book.



Building a book (part 1) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2017/12/building-a-book-part-1.html>)

December 21, 2017

Tom Kubik (<https://www.tomkubikphoto.com/>) is a gifted and successful commercial photographer working in New York.

He's also a generous soul and an active volunteer at Defy Ventures (<https://defyventures.org/>), the organization that Cat Hoke (<http://www.cathoke.com>) founded. Cat is on the front lines of fixing the massive problem facing those released from our sprawling prison system. While recidivism is more than 70% (that means that three-quarters of the men and women released from prison reenter the penal system at some point), Defy lowers that number by 90%... just 6% of Defy's graduates end up back in the system.

Tom travels with Defy to prison and works to give Defy's EITs (entrepreneurs in training) a face. He captures their light, amplifies their possibility and helps each person be seen for who they are—a person, a human with potential, a family member capable of making a difference.

I was lucky enough to spend a few days with Tom on a recent trip with Defy to California. Here he is with Cat...



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/tom-and-cat.jpg>) Tom is just one of the dozens of people we've been lucky enough to work with in building her new book, *A Second Chance*. It's a groundbreaking memoir, a useful lesson in what it means to forgive, and most of all, a building block in finding a new way forward. Not just for people in prison, but for all of us.

I'll be back after the holiday with more details on the book (it's being printed today and comes out in 9 weeks!). I hope that you and your family find peace and joy and connection together.

In the meantime, here are some of Tom's photos of EITs. Thank you, Tom, for your time, your energy, your light. Photographers tell stories, and few do it as well as Tom does.



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Kubik-170722-Defy_0433.jpg)



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Kubik-170410-Defy_0820.jpg)



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Kubik-161014-Defy_0874-sm.jpg)



A new book... we would love your help (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2017/11/a-new-book-we-would-love-your-help.html>)

November 28, 2017

In February, we'll be publishing Catherine Hoke's new book, *A Second Chance*.

Cat's the founder of Defy Ventures, a groundbreaking non-profit that is changing the lives of men and women while they're in prison (and after they get out.) As a direct result of Defy's program, recidivism has gone from 75% to less than 6%. Not only does this transform the lives of the families involved, it improves the fabric of our society and it saves the taxpayers a fortune.

Domino is donating all of its efforts to Cat and to Defy, and we're determined to share this book with as many people as we can.

It's a book about second chances, forgiveness, responsibility, opportunity and love. And it applies to everyone I've ever met, not just those that are in prison.

YOU CAN HELP: If you're interested in helping us, we'd love to keep you posted.

Just click here to sign up for our special list (<https://cathoke.com/>) (and there's a bonus video of Cat there as well). We'll be posting updates on this Domino blog and on Seth's blog from time to time, but this book-only list will get excerpts, strategy memos and more. We're counting on this informal street team to make all the difference.

Thank you all!



All the books, any book and this book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2015/09/all-the-books-any-book-and-this-book.html>)

September 15, 2015

At the beginning, bookstores only sold the books they actually printed. The bookstore and the publisher were one and the same.

Throughout our lifetime, of course, that hasn't been true. A unique element of this industry more than any other I can think of is that every store sells every book. They might not have it in stock, but just about every bookstore is eager to sell any decent book.

Books actually benefit from being next to their competitors. A book sells better at a bookstore than it does at furniture store.

The flip side of this, though, is that publishers and bookstores do their best work when they can promote a particular book more than the others. Promoting a book, making it stand out, working hard to have it be *this* book instead of any book—well, when you're the author and it's your book, this is exactly what you seek. And that's what the very best bookstores and the very best publishers do.

I have always respected and celebrated the comity and camaraderie of the book industry. I think the positive contribution of a book to our culture demands that we treat them as special objects, and that publishing and selling them is not just another form of commerce.

Today, my longtime publisher Portfolio (part of Random Penguin whatnot) is republishing four books that started here at Domino: *Anything You Want*, *Poke the Box*, *We Are All Weird* and *Read This Before Our Next Meeting*. You can see all four of them right here (<http://800ceoread.com/products/the-domino-project-portfolio-reissue>).

It's my hope that readers will be able to find these (<https://wordery.com/anything-you-want-derek-sivers-9781591848264>) books (<http://www.powells.com/biblio/62-9781591848271-0>) at fine (<http://www.tatteredcover.com/book/9781591848240>) bookstores (<http://www.rjulia.com/book/9781591848257>) everywhere. Including Amazon (Derek (https://smile.amazon.com/Anything-You-Want-Lessons-Entrepreneur/dp/1591848261/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1442234175&sr=8-2&keywords=derek+sivers), Al (https://www.amazon.com/Read-This-Before-Next-Meeting-ebook/dp/B00SI0B8G4/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1442235066&sr=1-1&keywords=read+this+before+our+next+meeting), Seth (https://smile.amazon.com/gp/product/1591848245/ref=s9_simh_gw_p14_d0_i3?pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=desktop-1&pf_rd_r=0EZ86AMGQPM2VHE6TEOV&pf_rd_t=36701&pf_rd_p=2079475242&pf_rd_i=desktop) & Seth (https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-When-Something-First/dp/1591848253/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1442235020&sr=1-1)) and B&N (http://www.barnesandnoble.com/s/seth+godin/_/N-8q8/?Ns=P_Publication_Date%7C1&_requestid=47166&fs=11312), too.

In a nutshell these are two of the problems facing bookselling going forward: How to build an online store that's good at selling a particular book, not merely all books, and how to maintain ubiquity in an industry that's being pushed toward silos.



Harper Lee and the two mythical promises

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2015/07/harper-lee-and-the-two-mythical-promises.html>)

July 16, 2015

Harper Lee is a legend and a genius. She's also the exception that proves the rule, twice.

Rule 1: Your book will not be beautifully edited, it will not be lovingly hand sold, it will not be taught in schools across the country. Your book will not pay you millions of dollars of royalties, year after year, for fifty years, and most of all, your book will not succeed despite the fact that you don't tour, don't build a following, and don't promote. And also, just to rub it in, your book will not become a movie that's as powerful as your book was, a movie that is remembered by everyone who saw it.

I know that it worked for Harper Lee. But it's not going to work for me and it's not going to work for you. It's a myth that you can write a book and the system will take care of you.

Rule 2: You cannot use hype and mystery and 17 articles in the New York Times to pre-sell millions of copies of the second book your publisher brings out, merely on the promise that it might be interesting, with all the writers who write about it never even reading it first.

I'm not jealous of Nelle Lee. She shaped a generation, gave up her much-deserved privacy and earned all of the accolades she received. On the other hand, I think it's worth noting that just because there's lightning now and then, you shouldn't plan on using it to electrify your house.

We need you to write your best work, and to share it. But please understand that this is the first step in spreading your idea, not the last one.



Goal setting (and a discount) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2015/02/goal-setting-and-a-discount.html>)

February 17, 2015

Sometime on Tuesday, February 17, Amazon is clearing out the inventory of Zig Ziglar's goal planner.

The 4-pack is here (https://smile.amazon.com/Pick-Four-Pack-Designed-Share/dp/1936719215/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1424106422&sr=8-1&keywords=pick+four+ziglar).

The discount, when it's live for four hours, will be here (https://www.amazon.com/Bargain-Books/b/ref=sv_b_9?ie=UTF8&node=45). For about \$3 a copy, less than \$12 for the four pack. The current plan is for it to be an active discount from 7 pm to 11 pm NY time.

When these books are gone, we won't be printing any more.

This is a book you write yourself. What Zig did was codify many of the steps, and Alex, Michael and I re-designed and rebuilt the idea into a more modern, accessible, sharable format.

It works.

I'll go way out on a limb and say this: I have never met a person who used a goal planner properly and regretted it.

You might discover some truths that disappoint you or make you uncomfortable. You might decide that a dream is actually better than a realistic action plan. Mostly, you will discover just how much you can achieve when you get in sync about how you invest your focus and your time.

If you and your team aren't delivering on your dreams and promises, the first question to ask yourself is, "have you written it down and followed the steps?"

Setting a focus, however you do it, is worth the trip.

PS thank for reading this far. If you visit [yourturn.link](http://www.yourturn.link) (<http://www.yourturn.link>) to check out my new book, \$10 off any order if you use the discount code 'tony'.



The bestseller effect (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2014/12/the-bestseller-effect.html>)

December 7, 2014

There are two markets for books (and music).

The first market are grazers, collectors or omnivores. They make the market happen. They read a lot of books. They visit the library often. They have 2,000 LPs in their collection. They listen and read around the edges.

The second market consume in *response* to the market. The average American buys just over one book a year. When I was in college, the typical dorm room had just 40 LPs stacked up. (Even today, when students have 100,000 mp3s, most of them don't listen widely).

This second market is almost always the market that turn a book into a bestseller. Bestsellers are the books that people who don't buy books are buying.

Back to those college dorms: The typical women's collection included Joni Mitchell, Dan Fogelberg, Billy Joel and Carol King. Not because these were demonstrably better records, but because they were bestsellers, the regular kind.

The same effect is responsible for all those copies of Harry Potter and The Davinci Code... they become bestsellers because people who don't buy a lot of books are buying them.

So, consider the trap that the bestseller effect sets: the publisher and the author want a bestseller, so they spend a lot of time and money on mass media, on storefront promotion, on even writing a book that feels like it will appeal to the second group. But! That's not what the second market wants. What they consume (read/listen to) is what their peers demand they consume. They are protective of what they buy and consume, because they don't have many slots for new books or new music.

Which means that if you try to reach people who aren't shopping for what you sell, who don't think about what you sell, who aren't even in the store for what you sell, you've got a tough road ahead.

The way around the trap, it seems (and I think this is true for many of the bestsellers that have broken through) is to obsess about delighting a critical mass of readers in the first group. To create a book and a marketing plan that captures the energy of this group and let them bring the work to the rest of the market.

Critical mass is a key part of this. In the era of weird, there isn't one bestseller list, there are a hundred. There's the bestseller list of political tracts (two, actually) and one of edgy rants from bloggers, and one for romance...

The sales for my **new book** (<http://www.yourturn.link>) just surprised me: Today's sales were more than yesterday's, which was a little more than the day before. That's extraordinarily rare for a book ten days after launch, one with no retail distribution, particularly if there's no big media or retail promotion going on. *People are starting to read it because other people are reading it.*

That's a really simple sentence, but it explains BuzzFeed, Thomas Piketty, Psy, and a thousand other cultural hits.

Maybe yours.



It's all backlist now (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2014/11/its-all-backlist-now.html>)

November 24, 2014

The secret of every book publisher's success is the backlist. *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Stretching*, *Dune...* these are books that sell, day in and day out, long after they've earned out their advances.

The distinction between the backlist and the frontlist (the new books, the promoted books, the books that publishers focus on, ironically) is based on two forms of scarcity that publishers have long dealt with:

1. *There was scarce shelf space.* The local bookstore could only hold 10,000 or 20,000 titles, and most of those slots (and virtually all of the merchandising and promotional slots) went to the new books. Book of year! is a category reserved for the new.

2. *There were scarce review slots.* The highest-leverage way a publisher could promote a frontlist title was to get it on Oprah, or reviewed in the local paper.

Backlist titles are noteworthy because of their profitability, but they also don't depend on shelf space (people happily order them) and they don't depend on reviews (the word gets out horizontally, or in a teacher's assignment, not from the core of the media machine).

You're probably ahead of me here, but:

There is now infinite shelf space. Infinite because the online booksellers carry just about every single book. And infinite because independent local stores carry relatively few books so that all but the hottest titles end up being ordered anyway.

And there are no more review pages to fight over, instead, there's only the long tail, the countless peer-to-peer recommendations that aren't bounded by place or time.

Launching a frontlist title using the old method makes no sense at all, because you will not capture these two scarce resources. Instead, as we saw from the gradual launch of the original Harry Potter and (in a totally different way) in the launch today of my new book **Your Turn** (<http://www.yourturn.link>), success comes from whispering to the tribe, not from yelling through media amplifiers. *Your Turn* has already sold 32,000 copies, which would, if it were in a channel that bestseller lists tracked, would make it one of the top-selling books in the country. We did this without any shelf space and without any media other than talking to people who had already signed up. This takes patience and a willingness to focus on the long run.

Some people launch with the backlist in mind because they have no choice. I think it's worth doing it because it's the most direct and effective way to create a backlist success story.

The future belongs to this approach: Write for your readers, don't try to find readers for your writing...



Pursuing horizontal publishing (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2014/10/pursuing-horizontal-publishing.html>)

October 2, 2014

I've explored a variety of ways to get to market with the books I've created over the last thirty years. I've self-published, worked with most of the major NY publishing houses, did a partnership with Barnes and Noble and another with Amazon... All as a way to solve the problem of discovery. How do we get books into the hands of people who want to read them?

Tomorrow, I'm launching a new book, and I thought I'd explain some of my thinking about my approach and the format.

Looking at my personal book consumption as well as what I hear from readers, I'm seeing that people are getting ever more impatient about the traditional format we expect from books... more than I would have guessed. If you're reading an ebook, there's a huge temptation to skip to the next book on your device, or if it's an iPad, to check your incoming email and then down the rabbit hole. We tap our foot while reading, rushing the author to get to the good part, fast.

Words on paper still have impact, but again, I'm seeing more people who would rather read a tweet ("a guy hunts a whale") about a book than work their way through it.

Since my last book (two years ago), I've wondered a lot about what sort of book would be worth the journey. After all, through this and my main blog (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/), I can reach more people with an idea than a book ever could. What's the point of all the scarcity and printing and risk if it's not going to engage people? We write books to make a difference, to spread an idea, to educate... and if the format can't do that, we should find a new way.

My new book, ***What to Do When It's Your Turn*** (<http://www.yourturn.link>), is in a totally new format, for me and for most authors and readers. It's printed in full color, heavily illustrated and in quality-magazine format. New digital presses from Heidelberg permit an individual to be able to do long or short runs in this format.

But the discovery issue still remains. So I'm hoping you will consider taking a chance as I ask my core fans to sign up for a pre-order of multiple copies. Three or eight or even more copies, the first off the press, sold at a radical discount, to readers who also become passionate distributors. Fans who will hand-'sell' the book to colleagues and friends. Individuals who will use them to teach or inspire, to get everyone on the same page. Horizontal movement, side to side, person to person, not top down.

I wrote the book as a tool for people who want to help other people change.

We see this happen in digital media daily. An idea we believe in, a change we'd like to see, arrives and we share it, hoping to spread the word. I'd like to replicate that, but with the power of print.

I'm doing a pre-launch now because I'm trying to print the right number of copies (but not too many) and then, in December, we can simultaneously discuss the book widely. At that point, like all books, it's on its own.



The end of the independent bookstore (and a new golden age for books)
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2013/08/the-end-of-the-independent-bookstore-and-a-new-golden-age-for-books.html>)

August 13, 2013

ACT 1: The Book of the Month Club.

After World War II, a wealthier, better educated country started engaging in more culture, more often, in a more widespread way. We were more likely to watch the same movies, more likely to listen to more music, and much more likely to want to read the books others were reading. Paperback books really came into their own, making reading portable and cheap, and the Book of the Month Club began to dominate.

It's difficult for us to imagine just how influential the board of the Club was. If they picked a book to be a main selection, it would be read, by default, by millions of people, discussed at the dinner table and at bridge club and instantly become part of the dominant culture.

This doesn't have a lot to do with bookstores, except for the fact that as the Club faded due to the long tail of choice and the fracturing of the monoculture, the stores were there to pick up the slack.

ACT II: The magic of the dominant bestsellers.

Here's the magic formula for a successful bookstore industry: Every month, a few new hardcover books are hand-sold, recommended by the local store. A few catch on and become bestsellers. Within its own cultural pocket, each book becomes a must-read, with the only source being the full-price local bookstore. The result? With a 40% profit margin and full return privileges, the local store can thrive. They don't need to carry *every* book, just the books that sell. And in the early 1960s, it wasn't unusual for a book to be a bestseller for a year or more.

ACT III: *The New York Times* bestseller list and Barnes and Noble end this magic moment

The insight was pretty clever—give up the juicy margins on the bestsellers and make up the profits in volume. Barnes and Noble had more inventory than just about any independent bookstore, but they needed traffic. So, they announced that if a book made the *Times* list, they'd sell it at 40% off (basically, at their cost).

This was a nuclear bomb for the independent seller. Suddenly, their core source of profit was in danger. Barnes and Noble was able to make juicy profits on the other stuff you'd buy in the store, and aided by the *Times* list, they bifurcated the market. Most people, most of the time, bought *only* the books on the bestseller list (the average American was buying and reading just a few books a year), but that's okay if you're the dominant player in a given town.

Harry Potter was the last gasp for many independents. They made that book happen, following their tried and true hand-selling approach. The word of mouth kicked in just as it was supposed to. With a profit margin of \$6 or more on every book sold, the upside was nearly a hundred million

dollars—but they got almost none of that, because Barnes & Noble (and the big box stores, which stole their strategy) sucked all the profit out of the bestsellers.

My mom used to run the independent bookstore she helped build at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo. I met sales reps when they came to our house for dinner, and saw the workings of what we think of as the ideal bookstore. Even during the pre-Amazon days, this was never a good business—without bestsellers sold at full price (and how many art books become bestsellers) it's almost impossible to sell enough volume to make a small bookstore work.

THE END: Amazon and infinite selection, better service, more information and better prices, too

If you love books, it's hard to see Amazon as a villain. More books sold to more people for more reasons than any other retailer in history. More cross-selling, hand-selling and up-selling too. The web pages of Amazon, on average, are better informed than many bookstore clerks.

Before Amazon and the web, we were on track for the bestseller inventory to totally dominate bookselling. Wal-Mart and Price Club and B&N had figured out how to dump huge quantities of certain books at really low prices, and there was pressure to avoid the long tail, and to guard shelf space zealously. I was new to the book world then, and there was just huge pressure to be on the right side of the bestseller line—everything else didn't matter. Amazon fixed this, by embracing the long tail and carrying *everything*. If you love books, Amazon was a dream come true.

But if you love bookstores, Amazon is the final nail. In fact, it was the clumping the *Times* enabled, combined with the discounting that B&N started that did the stores in, but Amazon's work in getting more books to more people meant that the discounts and selection they brought to readers removed the last bit of opportunity the stores had left.

Great independent bookstores deserve to thrive, and I hope they will. But they won't thrive as local substitutes for Amazon. They will make it if they become hubs, connectors and gift shops. The book-as-gift concept is just now entering an important stage, and we don't have to dumb down our local store to get there. More important, though, is the idea of a local place where smart people go to meet each other and the ideas they care about. We shouldn't have that because it's the last chance of the local bookstore, we should have that because it's worth doing.

Vilifying Amazon, though, makes no sense. More people can read and write more books today (ebook and print) than at any other time in history.

I miss the magic of the local bookstore, but I would miss books more.



Does Kickstarter work as a platform for books?

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/12/does-kickstarter-work-as-a-platform-for-books.html>)

December 31, 2012

Those that have been following along have seen the Kickstarter posts I did here (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/kickstarter-strangers-and-friends.html>), here (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/why-kickstarter-campaigns-fail.html>) and here (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/authors-wishlist-for-kickstarter.html>). Feel free to go catch up, I'll wait...

THE THEORY: The hardest part of book publishing is getting the first 10,000 copies of a book read. After that, the book either resonates or it doesn't. It's talked about, handed from person to person, used as an example in a book group—or it's not. Sure, you can add more hype, but at that point, you're pushing water uphill. I've always focused on how my books do their second month on sale, not the first month. The first month is a testament to the author's ability to self promote, which is far less interesting.

THE TACTIC: Kickstarter seems custom made to solve the 10,000 copy problem. The author with a tribe can reach out to her readers, activate them and make an offer: if enough of you agree to buy this book today, I'll write it and send it to you just before a publisher puts it on sale...

Book publishers are smart enough to see the powerful marketing leverage that this creates. When the author has done the hard work of finding those readers in advance, the risk the publisher faces is significantly less. Sure, there's the risk that the book itself might not be great, that the word might not spread beyond the first circle, but at least the first circle is secured. Most of what a publisher does (in terms of effort, cost and risk) is aimed at that first circle, after all.

IN PRACTICE: The Kickstarter platform is a bit of a nightmare for the independent author. I'm not sure I could find the intestinal fortitude to use it again. There are significant structural flaws in the way information is collected and used that virtually guarantee that 5% of the readers who use it will end up disappointed or need a lot of handholding. What should be consistent and coordinated ends up failing at both. And the cost of fulfillment and international shipping is high enough that it's likely no money will be made (which is fine if the other elements fall into place).

The good news is that the enthusiasm and support that early adopters bring to the table is extraordinary. This is an untapped human need, and people (some people, anyway) really enjoy the role of patron and early supporter. Others, of course, magnify the impact of their investment and are hard to please, but I found that the vast majority of my readers fell into the first camp.

AND THE PUNCHLINE: The book goes on sale today. You can see the reviews (https://www.amazon.com/The-Icarus-Deception-High-Will/dp/1591846072/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0) that have been posted already—by readers who paid their money for the book months ago. And Barnes & Noble will be making the book easy to find, directly as a result of the fan base coordinated via Kickstarter.

But, it's also clear that other books launched today without this pre-seeding are going to do far better in their early sales, because they are satisfying pent up demand, whereas my strategy exhausted pent up demand among those most likely to buy it instantly. And I think that's a smart trade to make, or at least I hope it is.

I won't be the last person to try this pre-coordination approach. I think it's particularly attractive as we enter a digital-only world.



Voting for a winner (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/07/voting-for-a-winner.html>)

July 19, 2012

The single most fascinating Kickstarter stat (<http://www.interworks.com/blogs/bbausili/2012/07/16/tableau-dataviz-kickstarter>) is this:

The odds of succeeding with your campaign are ten times higher once you reach about half of your goal.

While this is somewhat self-fulfilling (only popular campaigns get that far anyway), it actually points to an irrational part of human nature: we don't want to back a loser.

Irrational because it costs nothing to pledge to a campaign that doesn't meet its goal, any more than it costs anything to vote for a political candidate who loses.

The cost isn't money—the cost is heartbreak. Once you've committed, cognitive dissonance gets louder, and if a campaign ultimately doesn't work, it hurts.

Two lessons:

1. It's important to create inevitability around the projects you launch, wherever you launch them.
and
2. One way to appear inevitable is to set a lower minimum threshold for success. Setting a huge number feels bold and even macho, but it's clear that your fans would prefer to pile on after you've reached your goal, not sweat or be begged to be sure you reach it in the first place.

PS Eric Leinwand (<https://www.ericleinwand.com/>) is asking for votes as well.



When you focus on what's being removed, it's easier to understand the revolution (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/07/when-you-focus-on-whats-being-removed-its-easier-to-understand-the-revolution.html>)

July 17, 2012

We remove shelf space as a limiting factor in books.

We remove the cost of polycarbonate as a cost factor in CDs.

We remove paper as an expense in magazines.

We remove the number of channels as a limiter in the broadcast of TV.

These are not small changes. These are revolutionary shifts in what's scarce and what's not.

If you are still organized around them, you will fail. If you embrace their removal, you've got a chance.



Confusing media with messages (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/07/confusing-media-with-messages.html>)

July 13, 2012

Yesterday's post about the halfway mark got a few responses from people who thought I was selling books short. "There has not ever been, nor will there ever be, a "halfway point" for cultural achievements," one wrote.

Let me try again, with more detail.

We can probably all agree that more than half of the culturally important cookbooks printed on paper have already been printed. From the *Joy of Cooking* to Julia Child to *The Thrill of the Grill*, there are some essential cookbooks that have laid a foundation for most that followed. Now that the original cookbook market has been decimated by TV, by free recipes online and by the growth of the ios app, it's hard for me to imagine the pile of cookbook titles that millions read and trust to dramatically increase in size.

Or, if you grew up with science fiction, we ought to be able to agree that Heinlein, Asimov, Bradbury, Atwood, Lem, Zelazny, LeGuin, Doctorow and (early) Stephenson are quite a touchstone, and if we look at the future of all books on paper, it's hard to imagine a new generation of science fiction books being as widely embraced as they were twenty or forty years ago.

I'm not arguing that Scalzi and Doctorow and others won't write great books going forward. I'm pointing out that most of those books are going to be read on ereaders, and thanks to the shifting economics, few of them will reach as widespread an audience.

Forty years ago, it wasn't unusual for a typical bestseller to stay on the bestseller list for months or even years. Now, the typical book lasts for two weeks. More titles, more churn means less cultural achievement.

Consider what blogs did to the magazine article. Not long ago, a Time cover story was read by everyone you knew. Today, that attention has been replaced by 500 different blogs, and no one reads all of them.

The same thing already happened to pop music albums. We all used to listen to the same thing, now we don't. We used to buy albums, now we don't. Sure, there will be more music made by more musicians going forward than ever before. And much of it will be fabulous. But the chances that we'll see mass phenomena like the Beatles or even Elton (times 100 because that's how deep the hits bench was) are slim indeed.

I'm bullish on ideas, on innovation and on individuals who have something to say, saying it. But it's clear to me and to many in the industry that we're well past the halfway mark (given that we started 400 years ago) in terms of creating the essential library of touchstone cultural

achievements that every single smart person has either read or is aware of.



And then what happens? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/07/and-then-what-happens.html>)

July 12, 2012

What happens when we reach the halfway point, when most of the great books have already been published? Just as most of the great TV shows have probably already been made, and most of the great classical music recordings have already been recorded. Golden ages don't last forever, and it's entirely possible that we've reached that moment in the printed book world.

When that happens, the backlist becomes far more important than it already is. Instead of always being focused on 'what's new', we may end up thinking about, 'what haven't I read yet?'

This feels like a significant opportunity, particularly when it comes to ebooks that are easy to keep in stock. There are books from decades ago that are no longer in print but easy to create digitally. What's missing isn't the mechanics, it's the marketing and attention that is necessary to bring a great book to the attention of someone who would love to read it. It requires a cultural shift as well, one in which an author is happy to promote and discuss a book she wrote fifteen years ago instead of always being asked about the next one.

We're just at the beginning of a rethinking of how we can help readers discover lost treasures of our written heritage.



The power of simultaneous action (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/07/the-power-of-simultaneous-action.html>)

July 5, 2012

In 1776, the USA was more than 40 days across. It took over a month to ride on a horse from one end to the other.

Today, it takes less than a second.

And yet just about all of our systems are built around the slow build, the slow transfer of information and the slow acceptance of an idea by the market.

When 10,000 people contact Congress on the same day, it's a very big deal. When 1,000 people walk into a B&N and buy a book on the same day, it makes waves.

It takes preparation to coordinate this many people, sometimes many years. But once prepared, the percussive impact of that many coordinated footfalls is huge.



Kindle data progress four years later... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/kindle-progress-four-years-later.html>)

June 30, 2012

I've written a few posts about how I'd maximize the value of e-readers. Here's the first (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2008/06/random-thoughts.html) and the second (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2009/02/reinventing-the-kindle-part-ii.html).

Four years later, one of the things I've been agitating for—using the knowledge of how much time people spend reading a book and how many finish it—is starting to become real. Phil found this article in the WSJ

(<https://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304870304577490950051438304.html>).

Wouldn't it be great if you knew what percentage of people who bought a book, finished it?

Also interesting: my theory about non-fiction books is validated. When they're electronic, people vastly prefer short ones. I think holding the book in your hand gives you one measure of value (heavy!) while reading a short one electronically gives you the satisfaction of knowing you finished it.



Watching the price of media fall (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/watching-the-price-of-media-fall.html>)

June 24, 2012

I did a show at the NBC headquarters in NY a few weeks ago. I'm guessing that it costs them about \$6,000 a minute to make a news show in the studio. That counts the painters, the set guys, the three camera operators and their assistants, the lighting guys, the producer, the executive producer, the on air talent, the make up people, etc. etc. all working from some of the most expensive real estate in the world.

Cable shows cost less. Some are estimating a reality show might cost \$4000 a minute by the time it gets on the air.

And now online shows are being made by people like Demand Media for the cost of about \$2000 a minute.

Video podcasts and professional YouTube stuff is down to, I'm guessing here, less than \$500 a minute.

What happens to the market leaders when there's no restriction on what gets "on the air" and when the competitors have a cost basis that's 10% of yours?

The same thing just happened to books. A New York City publisher probably needs \$2000 a page to acquire, edit, typeset, print and distribute a book (making up a number from thin air). A self-published ebook author needs \$1 a page.

That's not a cost-efficiency. That's a totally different industry. But the if the viewer/reader doesn't treat the two products as fundamentally different, if reading or watching one is a replacement for the other, then a crisis is right around the corner.



Author's wishlist for Kickstarter (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/authors-wishlist-for-kickstarter.html>)

June 23, 2012

Having had a ball using Kickstarter, I couldn't help but notice ways I'd like to improve it. Here are my top tweaks:

1. Allow backers to get more than one reward. Right now, you need to open two accounts to fund two rewards. This is silly and helps no one.
2. Allow organizers to load balance after the project launches. If there are 250 things in this reward and 100 in that one and the first is close to selling out, let me move some of them around. Again, it hurts no one and just makes sense.

3. Allow creators to end a campaign early. If it's doing really poorly (or doing really well) and you've learned your lesson or made your point, what's the harm in saying, "okay, we're done here"? In my case, since I limited the rewards, that's sort of happening automatically.
4. Allow the organizer to decide which metric will be most prominently displayed. It might be audience members found, profit made, revenue (which is the key number now) or even units to be distributed. People maximize the most popular metrics, so picking what's focused on matters a lot.
5. Don't require that the rewards be listed in ascending financial order. Let the organizer list them in priority order instead, from best first...
6. Offer a simple way to mark items where international shipping will cost extra, and have it automatically added based on the location of the backer.
7. Make it easy for an organizer to show one page to a new visitor and a different page to a return visitor. This is easy technically and totally worth it for a platform like this.
8. [updated a few months later with even more serious concerns] The fact that there's no way to easily handle overseas shipping charges is an urgent pitfall that anyone who offers this service ought to be aware of (#6). In order to offer everyone a consistent deal on my Kickstarter, I ended up investing \$100,000 in unrecovered shipping costs.
9. The survey process is truly broken. With multiple levels, if someone submits survey data later than you expect, you have to redownload every single level in order to get the latest data. In addition, there's no cutoff, ever, into the next millenium.
10. Messaging is untrackable and unverifiable. For larger campaigns, this, combined with #9 can be logistically overwhelming.



Why (some) Kickstarter campaigns fail (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/why-kickstarter-campaigns-fail.html>)

June 20, 2012

Kickstarter campaigns fail when the tribe of people who believe in the idea is too small

It's worth taking a moment to parse that out—it will help you understand how the whole thing works and where some campaigns fail. You either need more belief or a bigger/louder/more influential tribe.

Kickstarter appears to be a great way to find fans for your work. You put up a great video clip and a story and wait for people who will love it to find you.

But that's not what happens. What happens is that people who ALREADY have a tribe, like Amanda Palmer, use Kickstarter to organize and activate that tribe. Kickstarter is the *last* step, not the first one.

There are some outliers that are clever and lucky enough to go viral among strangers, but out of the huge number of projects posted (increasing all the time) this is as likely as writing a blog post that gets you on the front page of Hacker News.

Kevin Kelly has a loyal following of true fans, so when he launches a Kickstarter (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/silvercord/the-silver-cord-a-techno-epic-graphic-novel>) on a topic that's outside of his known sweet spot, it still gets off to a good start.

The second part of the sentence is the word "believe." In Kevin's case, the abundant free samples dramatically increase the chances that people will not be skeptical about what's on offer. But even more important is the sense that it's going to work... The now obvious fact (<http://garrettgibbons.com/successful-kickstarter-campaigns/>) about Kickstarter campaigns is that if you get to 60% of the goal, it's almost certainly going to get to 100% and probably beyond. People don't want to back a campaign that's not going to work, even if it costs them nothing to do so.

Stop for a second and consider that. Kickstarter was founded to make it possible for artists of every kind to find people who would take a chance on something that *might not* work. It has quickly become a site where fans of the arts and innovative items can buy things that *will* work.

This is irrational, because you get just as much joy in the moment from backing a project that ultimately doesn't work, plus you get to keep your money and do it again for a different project tomorrow. But humans aren't rational creatures.

In the case of the jellyfish tank and the Pebble watch (and to a lesser extent, Amanda's record) we see that Kickstarter actually hits its sweet spot AFTER the minimum is met and success is assured. In those cases, people aren't using Kickstarter to fund a project, they're using it to shop for products that are certain to ship and that are already popular.

One way to think about this: some rewards are clearly worth less than what they cost, making up the difference with the psychic satisfaction of being a backer. But the popular rewards in most kickstarters are worth *more* than what they cost, giving the backer the discount that comes from having a direct and inexpensive marketing vehicle at work.

This isn't what the founders set out to do, but it's what the market has clearly said they want. If you give your tribe something to believe in as well as a reward that's easy to talk about, you've done two things right.

To summarize this part of this short series: Build your tribe before you need it, give the tribe something that they want, and make it easy for them to believe it's actually going to work. Kickstarter looks like a shortcut. It's not. It's a maximizer.



Kickstarter, strangers and friends (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/kickstarter-strangers-and-friends.html>)

June 18, 2012

My first Kickstarter project (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/297519465/the-icarus-deception-why-make-art-new-from-seth-go>) launches today, and I've spent a lot of time looking at projects, working with people who have built successful (and unsuccessful) campaigns and thinking about how it works.

Like every successful internet platform before it (blogs, Pinterest, Tumblr, Twitter, etc.) first-time users believe that it will magically help them find new followers, new customers and new friends.

Stranger identification and conversion. (sic). It almost deserves its own acronym.

Alas, with the rare and celebrated individual exceptions, none of these platforms magically and regularly turn the unknown author into a sensation.

If my Kickstarter works it will be for a simple reason: people like you, people who already know my work, will either sign up or tell their friends or both. It seems like cheating, but it's more like a long-term shortcut. The best way for an author to use the internet is to slowly build a following. Difficult, time-consuming and effective.

I'm not even sure there's a useful plan B.



More on the economics of the self-published book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/more-on-the-economics-of-the-self-published-book.html>)

June 13, 2012

For books under \$20 (which means just about all ebooks), all that matters is volume. Not margin, but volume.

A book in the hand of a reader is far more likely to lead to another book sold. Bestsellers become bestsellers largely because lots of other people are already reading them. I know that sounds silly and self-referential, but it reflects the social nature of books. *We like to read what others are reading.*

So, if you sacrifice half your volume so you can make twice as much on every copy sold, you've done nothing smart.

Second, for more and more authors, the book is a calling card. It leads to a movie deal or a speaking gig, or another book contract, or consulting, or respect, or a better class of cocktail party. Which means that the true margin on each book is more of these external benefits, not the dollar or three made on each copy.

Yes, you can make a living writing books. But you either need to write a lot of them (Asimov wrote 400) or sell a bunch of each title. Even better—make a margin on each book that has nothing to do with the selling price. The price of the book and the profit margin made on each book are secondary to this goal of making a dent in the conversation among your chosen audience.



Self publishers begin to explore the business out loud

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/self-publishers-begin-to-explore-the-business.html>)

June 12, 2012

One of the things that's happening in 2012 is that self-publishing of books is no longer a quirky outsider effort, but instead more and more often being seen as smart alternative to getting picked by the mainstream houses.

Andrew Hyde (<http://andrewhy.de/amazons-markup-of-digital-delivery-to-indie-authors-is-129000/>) goes into great detail of the revenue stream of his self-published book. There are ton of question marks about the best method to go to the reader, and as those settle down, we'll see more discussions like this one.

It reminds me of the way people talked about building their own websites in 1998.



Domino team, on stage (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/domino-team-on-stage.html>)

June 11, 2012

Lauryn rocks the house:

LaurynBallesteros-TEDxTraverseCity2012.mov



Michael MPD testifies:

MichaelParrishDuDell-TEDxTraverseCity2012.mov



And here's Al Pittampalli, bestselling author:

AlPittampalli-TEDxTraverseCity2012.mov



It's absolutely incredible what talented people can accomplish when given the chance.



Does curation work for publishers? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/does-curation-work-for-publishers.html>)

June 7, 2012

One mantra heard often is, “in a world with a million ebooks, readers need curators.”

Of course, traditional publishers are good at curation, because traditional books are expensive to publish, so they had to be picky, merely as a method of self preservation.

That pickiness leads to widespread rejection of books like *A Confederacy of Dunces* and *Harry Potter*, but let's set that aside for a moment.

The challenge of curation by an individual publisher is this: readers have no idea who publishes what books.

If the marketplace is wide open, an infinite, endless bazaar that anyone can access, the game theory behind an individual publisher voluntarily publishing fewer books is pretty hard to see. If the readers don't understand where the books are coming from, one organization (or even thirty) holding back isn't going to have any impact at all.

No, the only way to make curation work is to have it in place alongside permission. If the publisher has direct contact with the reader, THEN she can build trust, build brand, build identity and be rewarded for her curative (curationitive?) powers. Once you associate a publisher with quality choices, then (and only then), the curation pays off.

One more reason why publishers have to urgently build a permission asset of readers who actually want to hear from them.



Respect (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/respect.html>)

June 6, 2012

I apologize.

Earlier today, I posted a short remembrance of a hero of mine, a colleague, Ray Bradbury.

When I heard about Ray's death at 91, I had just spent three hours listening to the self-published audio edition of a new book by another hero (and colleague), Steve Pressfield. The juxtaposition of Steve's message with Ray's passing really resonated with me, hence the post. I know that Ray lived by the words that Steve was speaking to me.

In this era in which everyone is trying to sell something online, some people read it as if I was shilling at a funeral. I couldn't imagine doing something like that, and if even one person read it that way, I was clearly careless in my writing. I'll work harder to make my intentions more clear.

We'll miss you, Ray.



Ray Bradbury and me (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/ray-bradbury-and-me.html>)

June 6, 2012

Ray Bradbury passed away today.

What a good life he had.

In 1985, I was lucky enough to work with Ray and with Byron Preiss to bring Fahrenheit 451 to the PC and Commodore 64 as an adventure game (<http://mocagh.org/loadpage.php?getgame=fahrenheit-alt>). What struck me about the man was his professionalism. He was as far from a diva as a famous writer could be, and it was clear that he had made the decision to do his work, and do it as well and as joyfully as he was able.

What a perfect way to talk about Steve Pressfield's new book, *Turning Pro* (<http://www.stevenpressfield.com/2012/06/announcing-turning-pro/>), which launches today. I'm not sure if Ray knew Steve, but I know that they would have liked each other.

I also know that you will be moved by Steve's new book. If you create anything at all for a living (and more important, if you don't—yet), then this one is a **must read**. I spent the morning listening to it on my headphones.

Thank you Ray, for writing books instead of burning them. And thank you, Steve, for teaching the rest of us how to do that.



Writing for strangers... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/06/writing-for-strangers.html>)

June 3, 2012

is different than writing for friends.

A blog post for strangers needs a title like, “11 proven ways to improve productivity,” while a blog that is aimed at subscribers and long-time readers could be titled, “Try this!”

Same goes for novels and other sorts of books.

The novelist with regular readers doesn't have to reintroduce each character anew each time. The business book writer can ignore his editor who clamors for complete clarity on every page, and actually engage the audience as patient, thinking humans instead.

Going forward, it's difficult to imagine much scale in the stranger end of the business.

Which means you better hurry up and make a lot of friends.



Home delivery (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/home-delivery.html>)

May 29, 2012

At 5 am this morning, a stranger drove up to my house, got out of his car and walked up to my front door.

Something that happens nearly every day.

This is the insane last step in the almost crazy notion of the home-delivered newspaper.

Hundreds of reporters and editors and then thousands working in paper production, then printing, then trucking, then distribution to the guy in the car and then he drives it to my house before the sun rises. Even if I'm out of town and it just sits there until I get home, even though by then it's even older than it was when he dropped it off.

Why bother with all of this? Because there's a HUGE upside in the relationship between a publisher and a reader. The paper has power because it doesn't need readers for its writers, it has power because it seeks writers (and news) for its readers.

And there lies the future of the book business. Digital home delivery. It's the best (and only) alternative. Writing for people who can't wait to read what you write next. And amazingly, you get to deliver it for free, without waking up when it's dark out.

If you're intent on trolling through millions of strangers to find a few willing to buy from you, sight unseen, you've got a very long road ahead.



The future of the cover (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/the-future-of-the-cover.html>)

May 24, 2012

Great essay (http://craigmod.com/journal/hack_the_cover/) by Craig Mod on how ebooks change the role of the cover.

The divergence between the homemade covers that indicate the junkiness of what's inside by being junky on the outside, and the handcrafted covers that communicate care and taste in an iconic way continues to get wider and wider.



Amazon bans junk ebooks (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/amazon-bans-junk-ebooks.html>)

May 23, 2012

Just got a note from them highlighting (<https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/help?ie=UTF8&topicId=A2AH1EAPH0YKI9>) this rule:

Some types of content, such as public domain content, may be free to use by anyone, or may be licensed for use by more than one party. We will not accept content that is freely available on the web unless you are the copyright owner of that content. For example, if you received your book content from a source that allows you and others to re-distribute it, and the content is freely available on the web, we will not accept it for sale on the Kindle store. We do accept public domain content, however we may choose to not sell a public domain book if its content is undifferentiated or barely differentiated from one or more other books.

With a wide-open, long tail platform, this is going to be very tough to enforce, but they're right—having someone selling 10,000 books each computer generated and each based on Wikipedia content wasn't good for anyone.

As we approach a million books published a year (I think it's likely to happen in 2012), curation gets ever more important.



Using ebooks to promote ebooks (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/using-ebooks-to-promote-ebooks.html>)

May 21, 2012

It sounds like an infinite loop, but it's actually quite smart.

The people most likely to buy an ebook are people who are already reading them, and unlike blads, galleys and other printed samples, the cost of producing one more copy of a sample is precisely zero.

Some authors have had success promoting new books by publishing a chapter or two (that was the idea behind [changethis](http://www.changethis.com) (<http://www.changethis.com>), years ago), but Michael Cader is taking it to a new level by including samples (sometimes substantial ones) for dozens of new upcoming famous-author books in one free ebook. You can get your copy here. (<http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/bea/2012/BuzzBook.html>)

I think this is going to be a standard part of big book promo going forward. It's an inexpensive way to reach precisely the right audience.



Book content as a solo endeavor (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/book-content-as-a-solo-endeavor.html>)

May 14, 2012

Some would argue that books need to evolve into apps or other forms of multimedia—that books won't be appreciated by large numbers of people until appreciating a book ceases to involve reading it.

While this may be an accurate discussion of the public's habits (far more people saw the Hunger Games than read it), it ignores the key part of the production question: books work as an art form (and an economic one) because they are primarily the work of an individual.

One person with time but no money can produce a first draft that is substantially similar to what the public will end up reading.

It doesn't matter that the technology permits animation and color pictures and hypertext and javascript. Just because it's possible doesn't mean it's feasible.

When we turn the book into the work of a committee, one that costs a million dollars to create and months or years of pre-pub review and planning, the medium ceases to function. The long tail doesn't work—because it's impossible to create such a huge variety if each one costs that much. And the very notion of surprising, outlying ideas can't survive the committees that those AV books would have to go through.

For a long time, we've seen popular books turned into other sorts of media, and that's going to accelerate. But the core driver of the book business is going to remain lone (and lonely) authors bringing their ideas to a small segment that cares.



It's nice to be nominated (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/its-nice-to-be-nominated.html>)

May 13, 2012

No, actually, not so much.

About 20 years ago a film/VHS project (<https://www.amazon.com/Isaac-Asimovs-Robots-Mystery-Game/dp/6301122992>) I produced was nominated for a prestigious American Film Institute Award (<http://www.aifi.com/afiawards/>). I know it was prestigious because they told me it was, and because a lot of celebrities were going to be at the gala.

I got my tux, used money I didn't have to fly to LA and attended the big event. We were up against Shari Lewis and her sock puppets (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tIJ0jBjdRhE>) for best game/children's video.

I was sure that winning would change the sales trajectory for the video (Siskel and Ebert gave it two thumbs up!) and I was sure we were going to win. After all, we were up against a sock puppet.

We lost.

I can assure you that being nominated was worse than not being nominated.

All a very long windup to tell you that in the last two weeks, the Domino Project won two significant awards.

The Thomas A. Edison Marketing Award

(http://www.edisonawards.com/BestNewProduct_2012.php), Gold.

and

The Eric Hoffer Award, (<http://www.hofferaward.com/HAbookwinners.html#culture>) first prize, for Culture.

Edison and Hoffer were two of the most influential thinkers of the 20th century. I will make no representations as to the impact on sales, but it's nice for my team to be recognized. And congratulations to Michael Bungay Stanier for the win. Thanks, guys.



The real threat to (big time) book publishing (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/the-real-threat-to-big-time-book-publishing.html>)

May 10, 2012

The people who run the big publishing houses feel threatened by Amazon and by ebooks and by pricing and by the death of chain bookstores, not to mention the Justice Department.

All of these are contributors to the future, but they cloud the core issue.

The narrative of their fear is that book publishing will be just like it is now, but with lower prices and just one or two stores.

This is the classic outcome of the Innovator's Dilemma (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0062060244/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>). If you care about the strategic decisions publishers are going to have to make, this one is a must read.

Clayton famously tells the story of steel mini mills, which were disrespected producers of cheap rebar. They took scrap steel, processed it a bit and sold cheap with low margins. The integrated steel mills, justifiably proud of what they'd created and focused on increasing their profit margins, happily let the mini mills take this market. Who wants it?

You know what happened. It happens to just about every industry, from hard drives to furniture—the insurgents, coming up from the bottom of the market, had an incentive to refine their techniques, engage with their customers and innovate. The incumbents, saddled with much higher costs and less innovation, watched themselves go bankrupt, one by one.

In the book case, the disruptive innovation isn't a huge retailer or even lower prices, the disruptive innovation is the long tail of boundless inventory. Scarcity of selection combined with scarcity due to the marginal cost of each unit have disappeared.

Every single day, hundreds of millions of people read something that the big book publishers and the big magazine publishers didn't publish. This is astonishing—just 30 years ago, if you read something that wasn't a newspaper, it was probably published by someone like Time Inc or Simon & Schuster. It was a scarce object, one that you paid for and probably went to a special place to get.

Today, of course, that special place is your laptop or your tablet. And you're reading blogs (like this one) or tweets or updates or rants or pdfs or ebooks that were never vetted or curated or approved or processed by one of these legacy intermediaries.

The big guys turn up their noses at this content. They don't give a Pulitzer for independent bloggers. The *Times* bestseller list tries hard not to count self-published ebooks. The discussions at industry cocktail parties have almost nothing to do with what masses of people (rebar!) are reading all day.

And now the market is moving up a notch, from blogs to ebooks. Suddenly, self-published ebooks are taking more and more time off the table, more and more money from the pockets of readers. And none of that is vetted or curated or approved or processed by one of these legacy intermediaries.

Will there be new curators? No doubt. New idea vcs who pay advances to authors with enough of a following to justify them? Yes. The question is: will it be the big companies in New York?

Instead of working hard to keep their share of a shrinking pie, or working even harder to make sure the industry stays as is, I think the most essential thing legacy book industry players can do is set up independent ventures with great people and little interference and work really hard to put themselves out of business by starting at the bottom, not by reinforcing the top.



Powerful (and powerless) merchants

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/powerfulpowerless.html>)

May 7, 2012

The following things are so commonplace that they are almost beyond noticing:

A visit to Costco turns up quite a few items produced by a brand called "Kirkland," which is owned, naturally, by Costco.

Checking out of Barnes and Noble in many large cities and you're likely to see the Zagat's restaurant guide near the cash register. Zagat pays a fee for this. Not to mention the huge stacks of books in the window and near the door—that costs the publishers.

The endcap at your local supermarket features a deal from Pepsi or Coke, but never both at the same time. And the deal is paid for by the soda company. Slotting allowances generate millions of dollars a year in revenue.

These merchants have the power to increase sales of a given item (sometimes by 100% or more) and they're not afraid to use it and to sell it.

When we shop in the real world, we take it for granted that end caps and promotions and speed tables and other interactions will not be there because they are in the direct interest of us the shopper, but because they were placed there by the retailer to help generate income. It's a store, for goodness sake, of course they're trying to maximize their income.

So that speed table near the checkout that's covered with Maybelline eye-liner—it's not there because it maximizes our shopping enjoyment, it's there because someone got paid to put it there. We've been trained to respond to promotions with our attention and our dollars.

Online, where stores are more like tools than like stores, this behavior rarely transfers successfully. You bristle when Twitter starts inserting irrelevant tweets in the stream you see, because you didn't ask for them.

Online merchants have done an extraordinary job of honestly presenting relevant information and drawing a bright line between editorial and merchandising. Which means that they've given up a huge amount of power. Since online merchants can't *make* a particular item sell, they have far less leverage. They make up for it by selling everything, indifferent to which item you choose. In short, they've traded their power to you, the customer, in exchange for volume.

There's no comparison between the way Macy's makes a profit merchandising shoes at the store and the way Zappo's promotes shoes online. Online merchants have learned the hard way that they must take an obsessive user-first approach. This is the secret of the longtail online merchants, including eBay, Amazon, bn.com and others: they don't care what you buy, as long as you buy something.

This isn't a bad thing, and for most shoppers, it's actually welcome.

Which leads to the conundrum facing Amazon as they become a publisher. It's hard to make a *particular* book a hit online using traditional merchandising tools, which means that authors (whether they're published by Harper, S&S or Amazon) have to come to the conclusion that it's up to them (and their readers) to make books sell, because the online merchants have voluntarily ceded that power. The merchant doesn't pick the winners any longer. (See #3 on this list (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2011/11/the-last-hardcover.html)).

Publishers have been nervous about moving from a powerful merchant that they know and understand and can motivate with cash to a set of online merchants where it appears that a bunch of power is up for grabs—they want their share. In fact, the move is to the long tail universe where the power isn't with the merchant, it's with individuals and their tribes.

PS Since it's up to me and Sarah to tell you about it, please don't forget to buy a copy of **Sarah's bestselling book for Mother's day** (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1612182798/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>). Thanks.



Brick by brick—building a digital platform right
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/05/brick-by-brick-building-a-digital-platform-right.html>)

May 1, 2012

Amanda Palmer (leaving out her middle name, which is a story for another day) didn't used to be a superstar.

She is now.

Her Kickstarter (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/amandapalmer/amanda-palmer-the-new-record-art-book-and-tour>) project is instantly oversubscribed. Her concerts sell out, wherever she goes in the world, and she goes everywhere.

Her Twitter account (<https://twitter.com/#!/AMANDAPALMER>) has more than half a million followers.

Classic overnight success. Of course, it isn't that at all. Just a few years ago, Amanda was posing as a statue in Harvard Square, collecting dollars and quarters on the street.

And a few years after that she was building her fan base, one listener at a time, one CD burned for one fan and then another CD burned for another fan.

Amanda is a wonderful character, a warm and optimistic friend and a killer ukelele player. But that's not her secret.

Amanda is an impresario in service of her art. She understands that her job is to earn the permission of her audience, to make them big promises and then to keep them. She's aware that she needs to put on a show, and she does. And most of all, she doesn't merely sell to her audience, she leads them and connects them. Amanda F. Palmer is a touchstone, the center of the circle, a living, breathing experiment in audacity, in challenging the status quo and in having a good time while she does it.

The most amazing thing about this path is that it's open to just about anyone willing to put in the extraordinary sweat and tears it takes to be this powerful and this remarkable.



Tracts, manifestos and books (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/tracts-and-books.html>)

April 30, 2012

Has a non-fiction book ever changed your mind?

For me, it has happened literally dozens of times. Books have changed the way I think about sales, evolution, marketing, governance, interpersonal relationships, mindfulness, the invention of the Western world, government power and more.

Next question:

How far into the book did you get before your mind was changed?

Not a facetious question. I'm serious. *The Communist Manifesto* is 80 pages long. Certainly long enough to make an impact.

It has never taken me beyond a hundred pages to be persuaded. Sure, there are times when the pages after page 100 help me pile on, give me more depth and understanding. But a hundred (and usually fifty) is enough to get under my skin.

On the other hand, a tweet has never once changed my mind about anything.

Writing a tract that works is significantly more difficult than writing a long book filled with defensible facts and stories, which I think is one reason why authors do the latter so often. And when we finish a tract unconvinced of the author's point of view, our instinct is to point out that it just wasn't long enough! (In fact, that's rarely the problem—the problem is that it wasn't good enough, not that it was too short.)

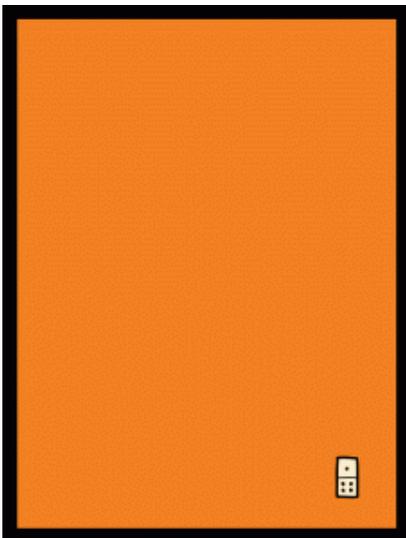
What if the great authors of our time were challenged to rewrite their favorite works? Let them ignore the price, ignore the bookstore and merely focus obsessively on arguing their point... imagine how powerful those arguments would be.

I think ebooks bring us to a new golden age of polemics, tracts and non-fiction short works that will actually change things. Without the pressure from an editor trying to justify a \$29 price point, the author can go ahead and do the work she's meant to do: Change our minds, not kill as many trees as possible.

If we accomplished one thing with the list of twelve books at the Domino Project (<http://www.squidoo.com/the-domino-project>), this is what I was hoping to achieve: We made the world safe for manifestos. Every one of our books has changed (at least a few of) the people who experienced them.

They're not longer because we took the time and effort to make them short. That's what I want to read next—another short book that will change the way I think.

(animation below courtesy of Hugh Macleod—click to make it dance.)



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/poke-the-box-animated.gif>)



A simple challenge to publishers: books for Ghana

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/a-simple-challenge-to-publishers-books-for-ghana.html>)

April 27, 2012

Laura Hazard Owen has a good overview (<https://gigaom.com/2012/04/27/worldreader-kids-e-readers-kindles/#comments>) of what's going on with Worldreader. Give a kid a Kindle and lives are changed. Not just in Ghana but in Kenya and Uganda as well.

One of their costs is buying the ebooks that go on the Kindles they're giving to students.

Really?

Tell me again why a publisher in the privileged world is charging Worldreader for these books... the incremental cost is zero, and the opportunity cost is vanishingly small. What a great opportunity to seed the market, to encourage literacy at no cost to the publishers and to bring education and books to places where they are scarce. What happens to book publishing and to the authors involved if a million or ten million kids grow up reading their books? (Not to mention the impact on the kids and our world...)

I've pledged all twelve titles from the Domino Project—if Worldreader pre-loads them, we're honored to have them on the device.

Now the real question: what publishers are going to step up and say yes with their entire catalog? If you're an author, ask your publisher. And if you're a publisher (even a big New York City one—especially a big New York City one) then this is a great chance to say yes, go!

More info is right here. (<https://www.worldreader.org/partner-with-us/for-authors-publishers/>)



Piracy? You wish. (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/piracy-you-wish.html>)

April 26, 2012

Publishers are spending a lot of time debating DRM on ebooks. Many of the powers that be are worried about piracy, they say, and they are resolute in making sure that there are locks on the books they publish.

There are countless interesting conversations on whether this helps Amazon with lock in (you can't move your books around, so you're stuck) and whether it hurts sales, etc. Not to mention whether the locks themselves even work the way they are intended to (they don't.)

For me, though, the interesting notion is of book piracy itself.

How many more people would prefer a hard drive full of 10,000 songs to one with 10,000 books on it? We're hungry for one and sort of unaware altogether of the possibility of the other. What would you even do with 10,000 books?

Software is pirated because in just a few minutes, the user saves a hundred or a thousand dollars, and feels okay about it because software seems unreasonably expensive to some (Photoshop costs about 10 times as much as Acorn (<https://secure.flyingmeat.com/acorn/>)). It's theft of intellectual property, but a tempting one.

Music is pirated because many people have an insatiable urge to listen to music, all the time, preferably with unlimited variety. And radio taught us that music to be listened to doesn't cost money.

But books?

Books are free at the library but there's no line out the door. Books are free to read in comfortable couches at Barnes & Noble but there aren't teeming crowds sitting around reading all day.

Books take a long time to read, require a significant commitment, and they're relatively cheap. And most people don't read for fun. Most of the inputs necessary for a vibrant piracy community are missing.

As Tim O'Reilly famously said, books don't have a piracy problem. They have an obscurity problem. I have never met an author who didn't wish that more people would read her book. Never one. On the other hand, Peter Gabriel and the rest of rock royalty rarely feel the same pangs. "What do you mean you've never heard Moondance?" I just can't visualize Van Morrison saying that...

I've written several free ebooks (here's one (<http://www.stopstealingdreams.com>)) and even when I *want* unlimited piracy, it doesn't happen.

Book publishers are crippling their marketing efforts because they're worried that 1% of their titles will be overshadowed. They have nightmares about classrooms of kids reading one copy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or entire divisions of companies reading a single copy of a \$29 hardcover.

But the short head of the book market isn't the future—it's the long tail. And in the long tail world, overcoming obscurity is the single biggest hurdle. If only piracy was a problem...



Our latest manifesto



(<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch->

[ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4))

What is The Domino Project?

The Domino Project is named after the domino effect—one powerful idea spreads down the line, pushing from person to person. Learn more → (</about>)

Archives

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THE
DOMINO
PROJECT

IDEAS THAT SPREAD, WIN.

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/>)

The legacy of a book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/the-legacy-of-a-book.html>)

April 25, 2012

So far, *End Malaria* (https://www.amazon.com/End-Malaria-Michael-Bungay-Stanier/dp/1936719282/ref=tmm_pap_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1315216094&sr=8-4) has raised \$300,000.00 in donations for Malaria No More, a leader in the fight against this preventable disease.

Sometimes, ideas in digital form come and go, they slip through the ether and leave no trail.

A book on paper, though, can become a force to be reckoned with. Shipping all those molecules around is expensive, of course, but the money makes an impact, and the book itself takes up space, demanding to be noticed.

62 authors contributed their insights and their guts to this anthology. It's provoked new ideas, started conversations and saved the lives of countless kids. All because editor Michael Bungay Stanier stood up, and people listened.

I won't ask again after today, but if you get a chance, we'd all appreciate it if you'd buy a copy or two or ten. Worth more than it costs.

[please share this post]



Self published (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/self-published.html>)

April 20, 2012

Ben Franklin

Ezra Pound

Emily Dickinson

Marcel Proust

Dave Eggers

Thomas Paine

Jane Austen

Edgar Rice Burroughs

Walt Whitman

Nathaniel Hawthorne

Stephen Crane

Nikki Giovanni

Virginia Woolf

The question isn't whether or not you should wait to be picked
(<http://informationasmaterial.com/?p=915>), the question is whether you care enough to pick
yourself.



The biggest problem facing book publishing (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/the-biggest-problem-facing-book-publishing.html>)

April 15, 2012

...has nothing to do with the Justice Department or agency pricing.

No, the challenge the big book publishers are facing is that a perfect industry is being replaced by one filled with chaos and opportunity.

Perfect?

Limited shelf space plus limited competitors plus well-understood cost of creation and production meant that stability reigned. The industry was polished and understood.

For three hundred years or so, book publishing had nothing in common with technology businesses where the underlying economics of the business were questioned regularly. That meant that just about all of the creative energy in the business went into finding new content, not new business models.

Yesterday, I wrote about a short film online called Caine's Arcade (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2012/04/lessons-from-caines-arcade.html). It's worth noting that more people have spent ten minutes watching this film in the last week than have read all but a handful of books over the same period of time. And even more profoundly, that this short film has raised almost \$200,000 for the star's college fund without really trying.

Conceptually, this is a book.

Of course there's no paper and there's no store and there's no sale. Which is why people in the book industry won't see it as a book. That's because they grew up in an industry that never worried about technology changing what they do or how they do it.

[As I read this, I'm worried that some may think I meant that Caine's Arcade ought to be turned into a book, written down and printed. Yikes. No, I meant that the act of finding Caine, of investing in a short film, of bringing that idea to the public—it's stuff like that that publishers are actually quite good at—the format and the economics will change, but the risky act of bringing ideas to the public is what publishers do.]

Revolutions enable the impossible at the same time they destroy the perfect. There's entirely too much handwringing about how the perfect book industry is no more. That's true. It's no longer perfect. What's happening now, though, is the impossible.

If the companies (and the people who work for them) are going to be in this business just five years from now, they will only thrive if they understand that an entirely new business model will have to be built and understood. And it will have nothing whatsoever to do with paper. It will be about ideas.

Which is what book publishing was supposed to be about all along, right?



Books have characters (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/books-have-characters.html>)

April 4, 2012

And the book business has them too. Brilliant, compelling, motivated and remarkable ones.

The hilarious art of book design | Chip Kidd



One of my dreams was to have Chip do a book cover for me, and perhaps one day he will. All I know is that the time I spent talking with him in February was energizing and reminded me that yes, we will lose something when we turn dead trees into emotionless bits.



Bring on the kiddie dentists! (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/04/bring-on-the-kiddie-dentists.html>)

April 2, 2012

Tom Robbins, ranting in the Times (https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/01/us/young-writers-find-a-devoted-publisher-thanks-mom-and-dad.html?_r=1), conflates the difficulty of making a living with the challenge of doing the writing:

“What’s next...kiddie architects, juvenile dentists, 11-year-old rocket scientists? Any parent who thinks that the crafting of engrossing, meaningful, publishable fiction requires less talent and experience than designing a house, extracting a wisdom tooth, or supervising a lunar probe is, frankly, delusional.”

Really?

This is nonsense on two levels. First, writing fiction is significantly easier than leading part of the Apollo mission (can we accept that as a given?). Second, and more important, it’s free! No gums are damaged, no thumbs are hammered, no shuttles are launched.

The author of the piece makes a common reporter’s mistake, associating the cost of paper with the cost of a book. Today, a teenager can self-publish an ebook in five minutes, for free, and I hope she will.

The single best thing to happen to the future of book publishing is the fact that young people who believe that they have something to say now have a chance to say it. Some of them will persist, and a whole generation of writers will be born. Dentists, we don’t need so much. Writers? Yes.



Books and publishing are two different things (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/books-and-publishing-are-two-different-things.html>)

March 29, 2012

This fabulous journal (http://craigmod.com/journal/digital_physical/) by Craig Mod talks about his creation of a product (as part of a team) and the chronicle of that journey in a book.

The book will never be published in the sense that publishing is a risk-taking business venture that involves a sale. But the magic of its bookness still matters.

If we can have books without publishing, we can also have publishing without books.



The null set (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/the-null-set.html>)

March 26, 2012

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/ibookshelf.png>) Ask a friend with a tablet (iPad or Fire) to show you her bookshelf.

More and more, you'll see nothing. Emptiness.

When we juxtapose an ebook with a movie, Instagram or pigs that attack turtles, the ebook often loses.

One of the very real truths of our culture is being hidden in the dramatic shift from paper to ebook—lots of people are moving from paper to 'no ebook'. For now, this is being concealed by the superreaders, ebook readers who are on a binge and buying more books than ever before.

If you're a fan of reading or publishing, though, the real truth is sad. At \$15 or \$20 for an ebook, lots of people aren't developing the online reading habit, and the industry is going to pay dearly for that in the decade to come.

My best suggestion: Every device shipped ought to come with a dozen entertaining bestsellers already on it, for free. Not all authors are open to subsidizing this seeding, but I sure am. Add five million or ten million readers to an author's fan base and she'll have no trouble at all making back the lost royalties, and publishers will soon discover that habits formed early last a long time.



What is Bach worth? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/what-is-bach-worth.html>)

March 22, 2012

Well, today and tomorrow, about 99 cents for 9 hours worth of music (download link (https://www.amazon.com/Big-Bach-Set/dp/B007MS6D1I/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1332423278&sr=1-1)). (US only, I'm told... sorry).

Enough of a bargain to make it the top selling album on Amazon.

Is that all the genius is worth? Of course not. Once again, it's an issue of substitutes. If you want Bach, you have lots of choices. If you want classical music in general, more choices still. And compared to everything else you can do, even more choices.



In order to get you to choose this one, this recording, the producers used the insane price to induce you to make the click.

The digital age increases our choices, relentlessly.



Demolishing the argument that abundance causes scarcity (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/demolishing-the-argument-that-abundance-causes-scarcity.html>)

March 19, 2012

The only public policy argument that can be made in favor of draconian opposition to fair use sharing of work online is that if too many people share it, more won't be created.

Copyright is part of the US Constitution NOT because the founders were trying to make Ira Gershwin's great grandchildren happy, but because they believed the entire community would benefit if authors of creative works benefited.

Go check out gimmeshiny.com (<http://gimmeshiny.com/>). One stunning photo after another. Or consider the new WordPress plug in (<https://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/compfight/>) for the brilliant Compfight tool, which makes it easy to find and use Creative Commons photos in your blog posts.

Or take a look at all the previously unknown artists fighting to give away their music (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9NF2edxy-M>) on YouTube.

Or the countless free or nearly free ebooks on the Kindle.

Is there a shortage? I think it's trivial to show that more interesting photos are being taken and published by more photographers than ever before.

And probably more interesting music is being made as well.

Sure, there's more junk than ever before, because without a curating filter, the obvious junk gets through. But you know what? In addition to junk, that conservative curator also kept us from seeing and hearing things that today we are amazed and delighted by.

Once we start running out of photos or music or writing or poems, then yes, please alert the authorities! Until then, the facts speak for themselves—sharing fair use ideas (and making it easy for authors and musicians to share) *increases* the quantity and interestingness of what's out there.

It might not be fun for those that have committed to making a living at this, but that only pushes us to find new ways to monetize our passion. And back to my point: making it fun for those in the field isn't the point. The point is creating a useful and interesting flow of creative works. And that's precisely what's happening.



Will you miss the encyclopedia? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/will-you-miss-the-encyclopedia.html>)

March 14, 2012

Britannica has announced what we all knew was coming: the print version is no more.

And they continue to proclaim that the digital version is far better than the free alternative.

Consider this entry on Rick Santorum

(<https://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1777304/Rick-Santorum>) (free this week only), and compare it to this one from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rick_Santorum).

The first is out of date, sure, but it also seeks to *end* the quest for information. The Wikipedia entry, on the other hand, *starts* the quest. There are more than a hundred outbound links on the page, all designed to help the student explore and discover.

Does it hold together? Can you follow one link to another to another and understand a coherent story about the person you're researching? If not, what's not right about it?

Are there hacks and mistakes and sock puppet issues in Wikipedia? No doubt about it. If you have a few hours to waste, read some of the Talk pages, like this one on paella (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Paella>). But since Wikipedia has never taken the position that it represents the end of the discussion, that's not really a failing.

[Also interesting to note that the completeness we expect from Wikipedia is totally lacking in EB, which really grates. Entries like Boingboing and well-known authors are completely absent.]

Should there be truth? I hope so. I hope that we can find facts that are facts, things that aren't open to he said/she said debate. It's not clear to me, though, in a fast-moving digital world, that the way to attain this level of certainty is to write it down in a book. What Wikipedia represents is the digital artifact of an activity, not a thing unto itself. This notion of opening doors is at the heart of what I'm arguing for in *Stop Stealing Dreams* (<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>). We're only going to honor our students when we push them to explore further, not to settle for what anyone (including an editor at an un-updated encyclopedia) tells them is the one and only answer.



When talking about your work is the same as your work (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/when-talking-about-your-work-is-the-same-as-your-work.html>)

March 12, 2012

Movies are a special case. When Tom Cruise goes on Oprah to promote a movie, the interview is of course no substitute for the movie. Even the coming attraction for a movie isn't usually a replacement for the movie (except for stuff like *Cowboys* and *Aliens*...)

On the radio, pop music had this debate fifty years ago. Is listening to a pop song on WPLJ over and over going to be a substitute for buying the single or the album? For forty years or so, the answer was no. Radio time led directly to sales. Why? Ownership. Control. If you own the album you can show your friends you own it and you can listen whenever you like.

For literature and complex non-fiction, the situation was the same. Going on a talk show or writing an op-ed piece or giving a lecture wasn't anything like a substitute because the experience of reading a book is very different from watching a TED talk or hearing about how difficult it was to get out of rehab long enough to write the thing.

But something fundamental is changing in the economics of attention: the cost of delivering the thing itself digitally is getting so cheap that there isn't really a bright line between exposing the work and delivering the work.

It turns out that the best way to promote your song is to give your song away. The best way to promote your ebook is to give your ebook away. The best way to get people to watch your thirty minute viral video is to give the video away. The whole thing.

No right?

Does that mean that authors and musicians and directors have no right to make a living? Of course that's not true. We need artists to make a living and I want them to. I think, though, that it's a mistake to confuse 'a right' to do something with the concept of a birthright, of the automatic assumption that the marketplace will insist on paying you for creating something it pays attention to. It won't, not any more.

We've already seen musicians go through this painful process. Some of the happiest, most engaged and most successful pop musicians and DJs working today are making their money daily, from live events, and eagerly using their recorded work (in digital form) as the promotion engine for those events. That's different, but it's not less. It's just different.

In the written world, we're already used to the notion that if you write a blog or post a comment, you're not going to get paid to do it. The idea that writers might contribute 500 or 5000 words to the public sphere regularly was anathema to the Writer's Guild and others just a few years ago. Today, it's obvious.

The complexity kicks in when we see one economic system (paying obscure authors up front for their work) fade away at the same time another system (authors racing to earn attention and thus permission and thus the power to monetize their work) grow. This is the moment (the best and possibly the last moment) for authors with talent to figure out how to be both generous and well-compensated.



Spreading ideas outside the bookstore

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/spreading-ideas-outside-the-bookstore.html>)

March 9, 2012

More and more, bookstores are turning into places where books go to die. Without active promotion, and even better, an easy way for the idea to reach people who don't hang out in bookstores, it's difficult for a book to catch on.

Here are two authors/crusaders (<http://www.squidoo.com/toward-justice-race-and-punishment-in-america>) who have figured out how to put alternative distribution to work for them. Bryan Stevenson, a professor at NYU, spent years honing his stump speech and it all came together with a

TED talk he gave two weeks ago. In just a few days online, he has reached more than a quarter of a million people—he doesn't use a book, he uses himself to spread the idea.

Michelle Alexander started more traditionally—with an extensively researched book, published by an old-school publisher. In the last few months, though, the paperback edition has sold more than 175,000 copies—not because she's been on television, but because she has relentlessly traveled, speaking to groups who needed to hear her in person in order to start evangelizing her message.

It's easy to look at the results of viral sensations and marvel at how quickly they went from zero to many. Most of the time, it's not quick at all—it's the result of years of groundwork followed by persistent attempts to speak up.



Burbling: watching an idea go from page to conversation (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/burbling-watching-an-idea-go-from-page-to-conversation.html>)

March 6, 2012

Stop Stealing Dreams (<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>) is closing in on half a million readers since I launched it eight days ago. There are about 100,000 Google matches for the phrase, up from four when I published it. What's fascinating to me is how visible the spread of an idea is now, how much more quickly and socially we share something that resonates.

Here's a live discussion (<https://theinnovativeeducator.blogspot.com/2012/03/live-wednesday-march-7th-panel-to.html>) scheduled for tonight that a reader and blogger is organizing with some passionate experts.

And there are spirited (<http://www.angelamaiers.com/2012/02/stop-stealing-dreams-seth-godins-manifesto-on-transforming-education.html>) conversations (<https://twitter.com/#!/search/stopstealingdreams>) and collections of quotations (<http://ivanasendecka.com/2012/03/03/stopstealingdreams/>).

And of course, several teachers and parents and administrators have proudly announced that they refuse to read it because they think they know what it says and they don't agree with it. Some things don't change.

The math for an author that wants to spur a conversation is pretty thought-provoking. Instead of the 3,000 to 15,000 people a book-for-sale might reach in a week (if it were a national bestseller), a free book transcends the financial and physical ballast it carries and spreads further and faster. It also calls the bluff of those that might be inclined to avoid it, as it removes excuses of access or cost.

There's no doubt that authors need to get paid. But when there's no scarcity of things to read, it's not clear that readers care. More and more of the ideas we talk about are starting out as free (blog posts, TED talks, ebooks, etc.) and that makes it harder than ever to make a similar impact with a traditional book.



An ebookstore is more like a web browser than a bookstore (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/03/an-ebookstore-is-more-like-a-web-browser-than-a-bookstore.html>)

March 2, 2012

[An addendum for [this post \(https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/who-decides.html\)](https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/who-decides.html)]

Google Chrome is made by Google. It's free.

Safari is made by Apple. It's free too.

The question one could ask is: Should Google be able to keep you from seeing web pages that criticize Google or compete with Google? Should there be a system in place where the people who make the browser get to decide if they're going to present you a web page or not?

Consider podcasts for a second. Podcasts are usually found by listeners in the Apple iTunes store, offered free and built in. Should Apple block podcasts about how great Windows (<https://twit.tv/ww>) is, or ones that encourage people to use Android? After all, people who want those podcasts could certainly find them if they used Firefox, right? One could argue that they're not blocking it, they're just not listing it in their store (<https://daringfireball.net/linked/2012/02/29/godin-ibooks>).

We're not talking about free speech here (which is originally a term to describe your right to criticize the government.) We're talking about commercial speech. Barnes and Noble chooses to sell books (<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/kindle-touch-for-dummies-chute/1107240208>) about how to use a Kindle, and Amazon sells books (https://www.amazon.com/Rebel-Bookseller-Bookstores-Everything-Communities/dp/1609801393/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1330609683&sr=8-1) about how to run an independent bookstore and Firefox doesn't get in the way when you want to go download Chrome or Safari.

I was in the supermarket today and they had a display of magazines at the checkout. One cover was about eating less, a direct challenge to the very nature of the store's purpose. All the magazines carried ads for products the store doesn't sell, and some of the ads encouraged people to shop somewhere else.

Our conception of fairness says that an independent store ought to feel no obligation about what to stock on its shelves. But when commercial speech gets involved, we get nervous, because stopping commercial speech inevitably starts to creep into more and more control. When the store is digital and integrated into devices, it gets a lot more uncomfortable.

I think the line is pretty easy to draw (at least in most cases). If you're going to announce that you're offering a wide browsing experience, the implicit promise to the reader is that you won't limit this experience for selfish commercial gain. There's a huge difference between someone standing in a store handing out coupons and a store reading magazines and listening to podcasts in search of speech they might not profit from.



The Shopify winners... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/the-shopify-winners.html>)

February 29, 2012

Alert Domino readers will remember that Shopify (<https://www.shopify.com/>) was a sponsor of one of our book launches (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//2011/04/raising-the-bar-strategic-partnerships.html>). At the time, we announced a contest they were launching for online businesses. (I get to cook them lunch, which should be a lot of fun). The winners (<https://www.shopify.com/contest>) are in, the prize money is generous and there's a lot to learn here.

More than 3,000 people started a new business as a result of the program—in just 8 months, these businesses generated more than twelve million dollars in sales. It turns out that this is 56% bigger than the same contest that ran last year.

Poking the box

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719002/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) is not just for entrepreneurs, of course, but it's clear that the web opens doors for those willing to make a ruckus.



Who decides what gets sold in the bookstore?

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/who-decides.html>)

February 28, 2012

We can probably agree that the local supermarket has no moral or ethical or business obligation to sell cherry-flavored Cap'n Crunch. If the owner doesn't like cherries, she doesn't have to sell them.

And the cereal maker shouldn't work under the assumption that every store that sells food will necessarily carry the Cap'n, even on special order.

But what about books?

There's been a long history of ubiquity at the bookstore. With a few extreme exceptions, just about every book is available at every bookstore if you're willing to order it. Universal availability feels like part of the contract we make with bookstores—we expect them to sell everything. In the digital world, this goes triple, because there's no issue of shelf space to deal with.

I just found out that Apple is rejecting my new manifesto *Stop Stealing Dreams*

(<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>) and won't carry it in their store because inside the manifesto are links to buy the books I mention in the bibliography.

Quoting here from their note to me, rejecting the book: "Multiple links to Amazon store. IE page 35, David Weinberger link."

And there's the conflict. We're heading to a world where there are just a handful of influential bookstores (Amazon, Apple, Nook...) and one by one, the principles of open access are disappearing. *Apple, apparently, won't carry an ebook that contains a link to buy a hardcover book*

from Amazon.

That's amazing to me. It must be a mistake, right?

First, because the web, like your mind, works best when it's open. Second, because once bookstores start to censor the books they carry (business reasons, personal (<https://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/30/technology/30apple.html>) taste (http://news.cnet.com/8301-13579_3-10127333-37.html), etc.) then the door is open for any interest group to work hard to block books with which they disagree. Where does the line get drawn?

A key part of the argument about SOPA was that choke points and blacklists break a system that works best when information is allowed to flow freely.

I've evolved my thinking on this over the years. At Yahoo, I was a proponent of having the company buy Netscape and integrate Yahoo into the browser. And I think there's nothing much wrong with merchants and vendors working hard with exclusives and deals to increase market share. When it comes to a *content* screen, though, I get nervous, particularly when the device is part of the store. Once you are reading your books on a device that is hooked into a store, the person curating the store has a great deal more power than a local bookseller ever did.

I think that Amazon and Apple and B&N need to take a deep breath and make a decision on principle: what's inside the book shouldn't be of concern to a bookstore with a substantial choke on the marketplace. If it's legal, they ought to let people read it if they choose to. A small bookstore doesn't have that obligation, but if they're seeking to be the one and only, if they have a big share of the market, then they do, particularly if they're integrating the device into the store. I also think that if any of these companies publish a book, they ought to think really hard before they refuse to let the others sell it.

[Should YouTube be able to block videos that promote Vimeo? Should Bing refuse to link to Google docs if you search for it? What about the Comcast cable box on your TV—should CBS be off limits?]

It's easy for me to have a workaround here with this project. Just visit the site (<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>) on your iPad or iPhone, choose the ePub edition and open it. But many authors won't have the same ability, particularly if they want to use enhanced functionality on a given platform.

These stores can't have it both ways. The web works because it's open. The stores (all three of them) need to be too.



Launching a new idea in a post-paper world

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/launching-a-new-idea-in-a-post-paper-world.html>)

February 27, 2012

Today my new manifesto *Stop Stealing Dreams* (<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>) goes 'on-sale'. On-sale is in air quotes because it's free, but we don't have a word for the on-free date.

Ideas that spread are worth a lot—to the community and to the creator of those ideas as well. When they're bound up in a book, an object that costs money to produce and print, there's just no practical way for an author to spread the idea in that medium without slowing it down by charging for it. That's why authors always embraced electronic media—you could go on TV to talk about your book, spread the idea and then get paid later when people actually bought the book.

But what if there's no book to buy?

We still don't have a good way to demarcate when a book ends and when something else (a manifesto?) begins. How long something has to be, or how involved, before it crosses from tweet to blog to manifesto to book...

For this project, my goal is to spread the idea, not monetize it.

I've posted the manifesto as both a printable PDF as well as a PDF you can read on screen and as an ebook (in both sideloading Kindle and ePub/Nook format). (In case the server crashes, here are two files on backup servers: The Printable PDF (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/StopstealingdreamsPRINT.pdf>) and the Screen-friendly PDF) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/StopStealingDreamsSCREEN.pdf>). There's also an HTML version on the site.

Mechanics (wins and frustrations):

I wrote the manifesto in Nisus (<http://www.nisus.com/>), a fabulous word processor for the Mac. Using styles, I was easily able to create a numbered header for each section, and to see what the manifesto would look like when it was read. When it was finished, I sent it by email to my trusted

copyeditor Catherine, who sent it back redlined in Word. I conformed her changes and took it back into Nisus.

To create the printable PDF, all I had to do was change the styles, add a footer and “save as PDF”. Nisus lets you put live links within the file as you’re writing it, and those links come through in the PDF, which is essential for a manifesto—the riff is a launching point, so I wanted to be sure readers could easily click to find out more about the sources I used.

For the screen-read PDF, I used a much smaller page size (all screen-read PDFs ought to be horizontal (landscape) or else the reader is insanely frustrated at having to scroll up to reach the bottom of each page. Please obey this rule!) Within the PDF, I wanted to put an easy way to read full screen and to jump around using the mouse and arrow keys, so I made a little block grid in Keynote, saved it as a jpg, imported it into Nisus and then opened the file in Adobe Acrobat to insert the live links on top of the picture.

Creating the ebooks was a little trickier. There’s a fabulous piece of shareware software called Calibre (<https://calibre-ebook.com/>) (if you use it, please donate some money, I did.) Calibre takes a PDF or RTF file and lets you turn it into the formats read by the Kindle and the Nook. It takes a few tries (well, for me, 12) to guess what sort of settings you want, but once you figure it out, it’s very straightforward.

I wanted to put the free manifesto in the Kindle store directly, but that’s apparently more difficult to do than it used to be, as the lowest price they permit is now 99 cents. So you’ll have to load it yourself using a cable and drag it over, or send it to yourself via email.

I tried (and failed) to get the Apple iBooks software to give you an easy way to read it on the iPad. The software is buggy (it’s free, but hey, bugs are bugs) and the uploading process is arcane, frustrating and ultimately a failure. For example, to import the file, you’ll need to use Pages (it says it supports Word, but it doesn’t, at least not as far as the folks at the Apple store could determine). So I went from RTF to Word to Pages to iBooks Author. The software didn’t recognize the styles, though, so that took a lot of manual selecting in bulk, etc., but after awhile, the iBooks preview looked truly great. (The best of the many rejection emails I got from the tech people who handle the submission process read, in its entirety, “The ticket says that you need to correct the title when the book is in portrait mode. Currently, the title is generic.”)

I’m going to pause and remark that after 27 years of making books, it was amazing to see the word-processed ugly file turn into a slick and shiny iPad preview after I pressed just a few keys. I’m sure that they’re going to work out the bugs, and once they do, we’ll see an avalanche of beautiful (but

probably not very good) books on these devices. The hard part has never been making a book look professional, it's about writing one worth reading, but that's a post for another day.

[Have you ever noticed how easy it is to tell a slick Hollywood movie from anything else, even one done by an indie director? Very soon, there will be no way whatsoever to tell the difference between a slick New York published ebook and one done by a kid in an attic.]

The final element of the process was building a place to explain all this, to coordinate all the links and to make it easy to find and share. I used Squidoo (<http://www.squidoo.com/stop-stealing-dreams>), a company I founded six years ago that offers free web pages (<http://www.squidoo.com>) to anyone who wants to build one, on a site that is powerful, able to handle traffic and is social networking friendly. What a surprise, it worked just great. I bought the domain stopstealingdreams.com and redirected it to my Squidoo page.

Total cost for all the mechanics of bringing this manifesto to the world, including 'buying' Calibre, iBooks author, iTunes Connect, a domain, a Squidoo page, my blog and this blog post: less than \$100.

As someone who wakes up every morning eager to share a new idea, my question is: does this process create enough impact and reach enough people to make it worth doing again.? We'll see.



Music Lessons (that work for publishing, too) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/music-lessons-that-work-for-publishing-too.html>)

February 16, 2012

I wrote this four years ago, worth a revisit:

Music lessons (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2008/01/music-lessons.html)

Things you can learn from the music business (as it falls apart)

The first rule is so important, it's rule 0:

0. The new thing is never as good as the old thing, at least right now.

Soon, the new thing will be better than the old thing will be. But if you wait until then, it's going to be too late. Feel free to wax nostalgic about the old thing, but don't fool yourself into believing it's

going to be here forever. It won't.

1. Past performance is no guarantee of future success

Every single industry changes and, eventually, fades. Just because you made money doing something a certain way yesterday, there's no reason to believe you'll succeed at it tomorrow.

The music business had a spectacular run alongside the baby boomers. Starting with the Beatles and Dylan, they just kept minting money. The co-occurrence of expanding purchasing power of teens along with the birth of rock, the invention of the transistor and changing social mores meant a long, long growth curve.

As a result, the music business built huge systems. They created top-heavy organizations, dedicated superstores, a loss-leader touring industry, extraordinarily high profit margins, MTV and more. It was a well-greased system, but the key question: why did it deserve to last forever?

It didn't. Yours doesn't either.

2. Copy protection in a digital age is a pipe dream

If the product you make becomes digital, expect that the product you make will be copied.

There's a paradox in the music business that is mirrored in many industries: you want ubiquity, not obscurity, yet digital distribution devalues your core product.

Remember, the music business is the one that got in trouble for bribing disk jockeys to play their music on the radio. They are the ones that spent millions to make (free) videos for MTV. And yet once the transmission became digital, they understood that there's not a lot of reason to buy a digital version (via a cumbersome expensive process) when the digital version is free (and easier).

Most items of value derive that value from scarcity. Digital changes that, and you can derive value from ubiquity now.

The solution isn't to somehow try to become obscure, to get your song off the (digital) radio. The solution is to change your business.

You used to sell plastic and vinyl. Now, you can sell interactivity and souvenirs.

3. Interactivity can't be copied

Products that are digital and also include interaction thrive on centralization and do better and better as the market grows in size (consider Facebook or Basecamp).

Music is social. Music is current and everchanging. And most of all, music requires musicians. The winners in the music business of tomorrow are individuals and organizations that create communities, connect people, spread ideas and act as the hub of the wheel... indispensable and well-compensated.

4. Permission is the asset of the future

For generations, businesses had no idea who their end users were. No ability to reach through the record store and figure out who was buying that Rolling Stones album, no way to know who bought this book or that vase.

Today, of course, permission (<http://www.permission.com/>) is an asset to be earned. The ability (not the right, but the privilege) of delivering anticipated, personal and relevant messages to people who want to get them. For ten years, the music business has been steadfastly avoiding this opportunity.

It's interesting though, because many musicians have NOT been avoiding it. Many musicians have understood that all they need to make a (very good) living is to have 10,000 fans. 10,000 people who look forward to the next record, who are willing to trek out to the next concert. Add 7 fans a day and you're done in 5 years. Set for life. A life making music for your fans, not finding fans for your music.

The opportunity of digital distribution is this:

When you can distribute something digitally, for free, it will spread (if it's good). If it spreads, you can use it as a vehicle to allow people to come back to you and register, to sign up, to give you permission to interact and to keep them in the loop.

Many authors (I'm on that list) have managed to build an entire career around this idea. So have management consultants and yes, insurance salespeople. Not by viewing the spread of digital artifacts as an inconvenient tactic, but as the core of their new businesses.

5. A frightened consumer is not a happy consumer.

I shouldn't have to say this, but here goes: suing people is like going to war. If you're going to go to war with tens of thousands of your customers every year, don't be surprised if they start treating you like the enemy.

6. This is a big one: The best time to change your business model is while you still have momentum.

It's not so easy for an unknown artist to start from scratch and build a career self-publishing. Not so easy for her to find fans, one at a time, and build an audience. Very, very easy for a record label

or a top artist to do so. So, the time to jump was yesterday. Too late. Okay, how about today?

The sooner you do it, the more assets and momentum you have to put to work.

7. Remember the Bob Dylan rule: it's not just a record, it's a movement.

Bob and his handlers have a long track record of finding movements. Anti-war movements, sure, but also rock movies, the Grateful Dead, SACDs, Christian rock and Apple fanboys. What Bob has done (and I think he's done it sincerely, not as a calculated maneuver) is seek out groups that want to be connected and he works to become the connecting the point.

By being open to choices of format, to points of view, to moments in time, Bob Dylan never said, "I make vinyl records that cost money to listen to." He understands at some level that music is often the soundtrack for something else.

I think the same thing can be true for chefs and churches and charities and politicians and makers of medical devices. People pay a premium for a story, every time.

8. Don't panic when the new business model isn't as 'clean' as the old one

It's not easy to give up the idea of manufacturing CDs with a 90% gross margin and switching to a blended model of concerts and souvenirs, of communities and greeting cards and special events and what feels like gimmicks. I know.

Get over it. It's the only option if you want to stay in this business. You're just not going to sell a lot of CDs in five years, are you?

If there's a business here, first few in will find it, the rest lose everything.

9. Read the writing on the wall.

Hey, guys, I'm not in the music business and even I've been writing about this for years. I even started a record label five years ago to make the point. Industries don't die by surprise. It's not like you didn't know it was coming. It's not like you didn't know who to call (or hire).

(<http://www.wtnrradio.com/news/story.php?story=279>)

This isn't about having a great idea (it almost never is). The great ideas are out there, for free, on your neighborhood blog. Nope, this is about taking initiative and making things happen.

The last person to leave the current record business won't be the smartest and he won't be the most successful, either. Getting out first and staking out the new territory almost always pays off.

10. Don't abandon the Long Tail

Everyone in the hit business thinks they understand the secret: just make hits. After all, if you do the math, it shows that if you just made hits, you'd be in fat city.

Of course, the harder you try to just make hits, the less likely you are to make any hits at all. Movies, records, books... the blockbusters always seem to be surprises. Surprise hit cookbooks, even.

Instead, in an age when it's cheaper than ever to design something, to make something, to bring something to market, the smart strategy is to have a dumb strategy. Keep your costs low and go with your instincts, even when everyone says you're wrong. Do a great job, not a perfect one. Bring things to market, the right market, and let them find their audience.

Stick to the knitting has never been more wrong. Instead, find products your customers want. Don't underestimate them. They're more catholic in their tastes than you give them credit for.

11. Understand the power of digital

Try to imagine something like this happening ten years ago: An eleven-year-old kid wakes up on a Saturday morning, gets his allowance, then, standing in his pajamas, buys a Bon Jovi song for a buck.

Compare this to hassling for a ride, driving to the mall, finding the album in question, finding the \$14 to pay for it and then driving home.

You may believe that your business doesn't lend itself to digital transactions. Many do. If you've got a business that doesn't thrive on digital, it might not grow as fast as you like... Maybe you need to find a business that does thrive on digital.



(http://sethgodin.typepad.com/.shared/image.html?/photos/uncategorized/2008/01/06/no_one_cares.jpg) 12. Celebrity is underrated

The music business has always created celebrities. And each celebrity has profited for decades from that fame. Frank Sinatra is dead and he's still profiting. Elvis is still alive and he's certainly still profiting.

The music business has done a poor job of leveraging that celebrity and catching the value it creates. Many businesses now have the power to create their own micro-celebrities. These individuals capture attention and generate trust, two critical elements in growing profits.

13. Value is created when you go from many to few, and vice versa

The music business has thousands of labels and tens of thousands of copyright holders. It's a mess.

And there's just one iTunes music store. Consolidation pays.

At the same time, there are other industries where there are just a few major players and the way to profit is to create splinters and niches.

13. Whenever possible, sell subscriptions

Few businesses can successfully sell subscriptions (magazines being the very best example), but when you can, the whole world changes. HBO, for example, is able to spend its money making shows for its viewers rather than working to find viewers for every show.

The biggest opportunity for the music business is to combine permission with subscription. The possibilities are endless. And I know it's hard to believe, but the good old days are yet to happen.



The end of paper changes everything (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/the-end-of-paper-changes-everything.html>)

February 13, 2012

Not just a few things, but everything about the book and the book business is transformed by the end of paper. Those that would prefer to deny this obvious truth are going to find the business they love disappear over the next five years.

The book itself is changed. I'm putting the finishing touches on a manifesto I hope to share soon, and I found myself writing differently because I understood that the medium that was going to be used to acquire, consume and share the book was different.

The first change in the creation of the ebook is that there is no appropriate length. Print books are bounded on two sides—they can't be too short, because there's a minimum price that a bookseller needs to charge to make it worth stocking. At the same time, a book can't be too long or ornate, because there's also a maximum price that readers are willing to pay (and a maximum weight we're willing to haul around).

None of these boundaries exist in ebooks. As a result, we get blog posts, (which are a form of writing that was virtually unknown ten years ago—personal, short, helpful non-fiction that's serialized over time), 1000 page zombie novels, beautifully illustrated and interactive apps and everything in between.

[Aside: how come we don't call blog posts, "really short, free, ebooks"? I'm not being facetious—what makes something a book? The length? The paper? The money? I don't think we know yet.]

We've gone from a very simple taxonomy of classifying (and thus creating) the thing we call a book to one that's wide open and undetermined. This is unsettling to anyone in the media business—we know how long a movie is supposed to be, how much music goes on a record, etc. And now, because the wrapper (<https://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/45/sgodin.html>) is changed, so is the product.

The second change is that ebooks *connect*. Not so much on the Kindle platform (yet) but certainly in PDF and HTML, we see that it's almost an insult to the reader to create a non-fiction ebook that fails to include links to other voices and useful sources. Not only are the links there, but the writer needs to expect that the reader will actually click on them. A little like being a playwright while knowing that in the middle of the performance, the audience may very well pick up the phone and chat or tweet or surf based on what's going on onstage.

Beyond these two elements of what makes a book a book, there's a fundamental change in the way ebooks are being consumed. Paper meant that a book was very much a considered purchase—more expensive, more time consuming, involving shipping or schlepping, together with long-term storage. With a ninety-nine cent ebook (or, as is the majority—if we count the web, with a free one), not only is the 'purchase' an impulse act, but the number of titles consumed is going to skyrocket.

The consumption of free (or nearly free) ebooks is more like browsing through a bookstore or library and less like purchasing and owning a book. As a result, there will be significantly more unread titles, abandoned in mid-sentence. Think blogs, not Harry Potter.

As soon as paper goes away, so do the chokepoints that created scarcity. Certainly we're already seeing this with the infinite shelf space offered by the digital bookstore. Hard for the layperson to understand, but for decades, the single biggest benefit a publisher offered the independent writer was *the ability to get the book onto the shelves of the local store*.

The entire sales organization at the publisher (amplified by the publicity department and the folks who do cover design and acquisition) is first and foremost organized around getting more than its fair share of shelf space. When my mom ran the bookstore at the museum in Buffalo, there were sales reps in her store every single day. And of course, for every book that came in, one had to go out, so it wasn't an easy sale.

Publishers cared so much about shelf space that they made bookstores a remarkable offer: don't pay for the books. We'll bill you and if you haven't sold the book in two months, don't pay the bill, just send the book back. In other words, books were (and still largely are) a guaranteed sale for bookstores. That's how Barnes and Noble got to build such big stores—they were financed by publishers who took all the risk.

Of course, if there's infinite shelf space (as there is for ebooks), ALL of this is worthless. <gasp>

Previously, I've written about the economics of substitution (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//2011/12/how-much-should-an-ebook-cost.html>) and the inevitable drop in the price of backlist non-fiction and fiction and just about anything for which there is an acceptable substitute. Since bits aren't scarce (remember, this is a post about the death of paper), it's extremely difficult to charge a premium for an ebook that has a substitute. The vast majority of books published do have substitutes, of course, so the price is going to fall.

Summary: flip scarcity with abundance and everything changes.



Effects: Hawthorne, scarcity and showroom (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/effects-hawthorne-scarcity-and-showroom.html>)

February 6, 2012

The Hawthorne (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hawthorne_effect) effect describes how people react to changes in their environment—particularly to the knowledge that they are being paid attention to. Turn up the lights in the factory and productivity goes up. Turn them down and productivity

goes up.

It turns out that the Hawthorne effect works at retail too. Tell the buyer at the store that you have a new edition, or a new format, or a new cover or a new pricing strategy and you have a new chance at shelf space. Here (http://www.casualoptimist.com/2012/02/06/truman-capote-designs-by-megan-wilson/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+TheCasualOptimist+%28The+Casual+Optimist%29)’s an example of this very effort around Truman Capote’s books.

The scarcity effect is surprisingly powerful in a world that’s suddenly filled with abundance. We’ve been trained to expect that every book will be available everywhere, forever. When I had 600 copies of a book that I no longer wanted to warehouse, I blogged that I just had a few left. Sold them all in twenty minutes—and (alas) disappointed more people than I would have liked to. The interesting takeaway for me is that the book has been available for over a year, so it’s not like it was hiding. Only when it became scarce did the rush happen.

The showroom effect is something we’re seeing again and again online. Having your product in a store makes your online sales go up, sometimes significantly. It certainly has a huge impact on ebooks, because, at least for now, ebooks are seen as a *shadow* of the real book—so if the “real” book is right there, before your eyes, it prompts you to go online and get the digital replacement.

As retail shifts within the book world, some of these effects are going to wane, but right now they matter a lot.



Keeping the trains running (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/02/keeping-the-trains-running.html>)

February 1, 2012

In any business with a lot of moving parts, sooner or later the practice of running the business stops being about strategy and growth spurts and starts being about keeping the process you’ve built from breaking down.

Spin enough plates and soon you will end up keeping the plates spinning instead of finding new plates to spin.

Consider this interview (<http://www.mediabistro.com/articles/cache/a11424.asp>) Jeff did. The publisher of one of the leading book imprints says, “The most important thing an author can do is have his or her book in on time.”

Really?

That’s the most important thing an author can do?

Yes, there are a lot of meetings and a lot of boxes to check and processes to be paid attention to. And lots of meetings about meetings. But the most important thing an author can do is write a breakthrough book, one that makes readers gasp and talk and share. And the second most important thing an author can do is build a tribe, a significant connection with a growing number of people.

And the most important thing a publisher can do is exploit the discontinuities and chaos in the industry to establish new assets, assets that can be used again and again for multiple authors, that can become the foundation for the next fifty years of book publishing, because the old foundation is going to disappear before the end of the decade. Gone.

Yes, without trains running on time it’s hard to get anywhere. But no, that’s not what the shareholders and the authors are hoping you’ll do every day.



Ubiquity (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/ubiquity.html>)

January 30, 2012

Web users have been trained long enough to know what they want: everything.

That’s the promise of the web. Every book for sale at Amazon. Every search result visible on Google. Every auctioned item right there on eBay.

Not piracy. Availability.

The music industry got confused about this and decided that people merely wanted to steal music. What’s clear now from the rise of iTunes as well as ad and subscriber-supported services like Spotify is that people will happily pay as long as it brings most everything along for the ride.

And Netflix shows us that subscriptions are generally more welcomed than a la carte sales.

Into this world walks the MPAA, the movie business and the folks who make books.

And once again, there's the same mistake: they think piracy is the problem. It's not. The problem is that these providers are doing nothing to embrace ubiquity, because their heritage is all about scarcity.

When the VHS came along, the MPAA insisted that the movie industry would be killed by it. They finally listened to the market and made a fortune. And when DVD came along, the same thing happened. Form factors change and the business model that supports them must change as well. The business model for an ebook can't possibly be the same as it is for a paper book, despite the best efforts and hyperventilation of a few overpaid book publishing executives.

When in doubt, move toward ubiquity. When wondering, favor subscriptions.

Readers will pay.

Moviegoers will pay.

If you give them what they want, which is everything, right now, easily found and discussed.



Downside up (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/downside-up.html>)

January 27, 2012

The single biggest change in book publishing is this:

The industry was built around finding readers for its writers.

And new technologies and business models now mean that the most successful publishers and authors find *writers for their readers* instead.

Traditionally, a book is signed, written, edited, designed, printed and distributed and THEN the publisher runs around like crazy trying to alert people about the book, get shelf space and media attention and reviews... all a way of finding readers for the writing that was published.

In the era of permission marketing, the writer already knows her readers, the writer already has the ability to contact those readers. If not the writer, than the publisher or the bookstore.

And that connection is an asset, a valuable one. It means that the attention is already there but must be re-earned regularly. So someone like John Scalzi (<http://whatever.scalzi.com/>) or Cory Doctorow (<https://boingboing.net/>) wakes up in the morning thinking about what he can write for his readers, not how to get more readers for what he's already written.

[Think about a successful conference. They can invite high profile speakers because they already have an audience. Or think about being asked about appearing on a talk show. You go for free because the talk show already has an audience. This isn't new, it's merely new to publishing.]

And thus, everything changes. The risk. The timing. The deals. The personalities. The books themselves.

The losers at the end of this round are obvious: entities that haven't bothered to build a direct connection with readers. Everything else is commentary.



The Academy Awards are not news (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/the-academy-awards-are-not-news.html>)

January 24, 2012

Neither are the nominations.

Feature stories about who is going to win or the personal lives of the actors and directors involved are fluff unworthy of a space-limited newspaper.

The show is banal and nearly endless.

I don't care who wins, and a year later, very few remember. And the financial impact of winning is dramatically overstated.

All of which is a way of saying that I'm jealous that this marketing/hypestorm exists in an industry that I'm not in, and that I marvel at how extraordinary the publicists are in milking this non-event for every column inch they can.

Certain traditions (like the NY Times bestseller list, the Super Bowl, these awards, the Nobel prize and a few others) have stood the test of time and are now beacons of attention and safety in an overcrowded, flaky world. It's almost impossible to add a new one to the pantheon, but quite an

achievement if you do.



Apple didn't make publishing easier... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/apple-didnt-make-publishing-easier.html>)

January 20, 2012

They made it easier to get your ideas into digital
(<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/technology/2012/01/apple-ibooks-author-free-mac-app.html>)
print.

There's a huge difference between printing and publishing.

Printing is a commodity, a straightforward but important process that takes time and money. Clearly, digital 'print' in the form of an ebook is easier and cheaper than paper printing, which involves cutting down trees and paying for trucks and shipping, etc.

But publishing is something else entirely. Publishing is the act of curation, of taking financial risk to do the marketing work of finding people who want to read your book. Publishing is venture capital for ideas. Publishing involves either building direct relationships with readers (like you and I have) or in gaining access to scarce shelf space with retailers who have those relationships. A good publisher, then, gets your book on the shelf at Barnes and Noble, or uses some sort of connection (an electronic one, perhaps, or a trade show) to get the book in front of the reader and to make a sale.

Making it easier to get a book in the iBook store is great, it will enable even more writers to get their books in print. In addition, Apple's new software will make those books prettier and maybe more fun.

But publishing? Not at all. Doesn't help one bit.



Knock, knock, it's the future (Building 59) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/knock-knock-its-the-future-building-59.html>)

January 19, 2012

Why not ban digital cameras?

Kodak declared bankruptcy this week. Legislation to ban digital cameras could have saved this company, a “jobs creator,” pillar of the community and long-time wonderful brand. One wonders why they didn’t make the effort? Would you have lobbied for that bill?

A friend tells a story about Kodak. Apparently, they had 59 buildings on the site that made film. As the film business started to shrink, the obvious thing for Kodak to do was to shrink as well, to reduce overhead, to become more nimble. The CEO said, “look out at those buildings and answer this question for me: How many steps are involved in making film?”

The answer, of course, was 59. Slowly shrinking wasn’t an option. The overhang was too large, it was going to take a leap, not a gradual series of steps. And that’s why the future is uncomfortable for most successful industrialists, including those in the media business.

It’s interesting to note that the only people who are in favor of SOPA and PIPA are people who are *paid* to be in favor of it. And creators (authors like me and Clay Shirky and Scott Adams (<http://dilbert.com/blog/entry/sopa/>)) aren’t. While the folks at the “Copyright Alliance” pretend to be looking out for the interests of independent filmmakers and authors, the fact is that the only paying members of their lobbying group seem to be big corporations, corporations that aren’t worried about creators, they’re worried about profits. Given a choice between a great film and a profitable one, they’d pick the profitable one every time. Given the choice between paying net profits to creators and adjusting the accounting...

Anyway, back to the future:

The leap to a new structure is painful for successful industries precisely because they’re successful. In book publishing, the carefully constructed system of agents, advances, copyeditors, printers, scarcity, distributors, sales calls, bestseller lists, returns and lunches is threatened by the new regime of the long tail, zero marginal cost and ebook readers with a central choke point. The problem with getting from one place to another is that you need to shut down building 59, and it’s hard to do that while the old model is still working, at least a little bit.

Just about all the people who lost their jobs in Rochester meant well and worked hard and did their jobs well. They need to blame the senior management of Kodak, the ones who were afraid of the future and hoped it would go away. There are more pictures being taken more often by more people than ever before—Kodak leadership couldn’t deal with their overhang and was so in love with their success that they insisted the world change in their favor, as opposed to embracing the future that was sure to arrive.

Please understand that the destruction of the music business had no impact at all on the amount of music available, and little that I can see on the quality of that music either. Musicians just want to make music, thanks very much, and they'll find a way to make a living gigging in order to do so. The destruction of the film business in Rochester is going to have very little impact on people's ability to take photos. The destruction of the New York publishing establishment will make me sad, and they/we should hustle, but it's not going to have much impact on the number of books that are written.

Before we rush to the most draconian solution we can think of to save the status quo, I think it's worth considering what the function of the threatened industry is, and whether we can achieve that function more directly now that the future is arriving.

Check out this short TED video (<https://www.ted.com/talks/view/lang/en//id/1329>) from Clay Shirky. Especially the first minute, the middle 90 seconds and the last one as well.



The Death and Taxes poster is now available in bulk...
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/the-death-and-taxes-poster-is-now-available-in-bulk.html>)

January 10, 2012

Jess Bachman, the brilliant designer behind this bestselling poster, figured out how to use Kickstarter so schools and organizations can get 5 or more copies at a time, cheaply:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1071796535/death-and-taxes-2012-multiples-and-bulk>
(<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1071796535/death-and-taxes-2012-multiples-and-bulk>)

Check it out.



Advice for authors, part one and part two (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/advice-for-authors-part-one-and-part-two.html>)

January 9, 2012

If you're an author or an aspiring author (and I trust that you are) it's time to end the fruitless struggle with a dying business model and think hard about how the world has changed. I've written two posts on this (the first (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2005/07/advise_for_auth.html) and the second (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2006/08/advice_for_auth.html)).

Here, unchanged, are both of them...

From six years ago:

Advice for authors

Always beware free advice. It is worth what it costs!

That said, I get a fair number of notes from well respected, intelligent people who are embarking on their first non-fiction book project. They tend to ask very similar questions, so I thought I'd go ahead and put down my five big ideas in one place to make it easier for everyone.

I guarantee you that you won't agree with all of them, but, as they say, your mileage may vary.

1. Please understand that book publishing is an organized hobby, not a business.

The return on equity and return on time for authors and for publishers is horrendous. If you're doing it for the money, you're going to be disappointed.

On the other hand, a book gives you leverage to spread an idea and a brand far and wide. There's a worldview that's quite common that says that people who write books know what they are talking about and that a book confers some sort of authority.

2. The timeframe for the launch of books has gone from silly to unrealistic.

When the world moved more slowly, waiting more than a year for a book to come out was not great, but tolerable. Today, even though all other media has accelerated rapidly, books still take a year or more. You need to consider what the shelf life of your idea is.

3. There is no such thing as effective book promotion by a book publisher.

This isn't true, of course. Harry Potter gets promoted. So did Freakonomics. But out of the 75,000 titles published last year in the US alone, I figure 100 were effectively promoted by the publishers. This leaves a pretty big gap.

This gap is either unfilled, in which case the book fails, or it is filled by the author. Here's the thing: publishing a book is really nothing but a socially acceptable opportunity to promote yourself and your ideas far and wide and often.

If you don't promote it, no one will. If you don't have a better strategy than, "Let's get on Oprah" you should stop now. If you don't have an asset already—a permission base of thousands or tens of thousands of people, a popular blog, thousands of employees, a personal relationship with Willard Scott... then it's too late to start building that asset once you start working on a book.

By the way, blurbs don't sell books. Not really. You can get all the blurbs in the world for your book and it won't help if you haven't done everything else (quick aside: the guy who invented the word "blurb" also wrote the poem Purple Cow).

4. Books cost money and require the user to read them for the idea to spread.

Obvious, sure, but real problems. Real problems because the cost of a book introduces friction to your idea. It makes the idea spread much much more slowly than an online meme because in order for it to spread, someone has to buy it. Add to that the growing (and sad) fact that people hate to read. Too often, people have told me, with pride, that they read three chapters of my book. Just three.

5. Publishing is like venture capital, not like printing.

Printing your own book is very very easy and not particularly expensive. You can hire professional copyeditors and designers and end up with a book that looks just like one from Random House. That's easy stuff.

What Random House and others do is invest. They invest cash in an advance. They invest time in creating the book itself and selling it in and they invest more cash in printing books. Like all VCs, they want a big return.

If you need the advance to live on, then publishers serve an essential function. If, on the other hand, you're like most non-fiction authors and spreading the idea is worth more than the advance, you may not.

So, what's my best advice?

Build an asset. Large numbers of influential people who read your blog or read your emails or watch your TV show or love your restaurant or or or...

Then, put your idea into a format where it will spread fast. That could be an ebook (a free one) or a pamphlet (a cheap one—the Joy of Jello sold millions and millions of copies at a dollar or less).

Then, if your idea catches on, you can sell the souvenir edition. The book. The thing people keep on their shelf or lend out or get from the library. Books are wonderful (I own too many!) but they're not necessarily the best vessel for spreading your idea.

And the punchline, of course, is that if you do all these things, you won't need a publisher. And that's exactly when a publisher will want you! That's the sort of author publishers do the best with.

And from five years ago:

Advice for authors

It happened again. There I was, meeting with someone who I thought had nothing to do with books or publishing, and it turns out his new book just came out.

With more than 75,000 books published every year (not counting ebooks or blogs), the odds are actually pretty good that you've either written a book, are writing a book or want to write one.

Hence this short list:

1. Lower your expectations. The happiest authors are the ones that don't expect much.
2. The best time to start promoting your book is three years before it comes out. Three years to build a reputation, build a permission asset, build a blog, build a following, build credibility and build the connections you'll need later.
3. Pay for an ~~editor~~ editor. Not just to fix the typos, but to actually make your ramblings into something that people will choose to read. I found someone I like working with at the EFA. (<http://www.the-efa.org/>) One of the things traditional publishers used to do is provide really insightful, even brilliant editors (people like Fred Hills and Megan Casey), but alas, that doesn't happen very often. And hiring your own editor means you'll value the process more.
4. Understand that a non-fiction book is a souvenir, just a vessel for the ideas themselves. You don't want the ideas to get stuck in the book... you want them to spread. Which means that you shouldn't hoard the idea! The more you give away, the better you will do.
5. Don't try to sell your book to everyone. First, consider this: (<http://parapublishing.com/sites/para/resources/statistics.cfm>) "58% of the US adult population never reads another book after high school." Then, consider the fact that among people even willing to buy a book, yours is just a tiny little needle in a very big haystack. Far better to obsess about a little subset of the market—that subset that you have permission to talk with, that subset where you have credibility, and most important, that subset where people just can't live without your book.
6. Resist with all your might the temptation to hire a publicist to get you on Oprah. First, you won't get on Oprah (if you do, drop me a note and I'll mention you as the exception). Second, it's expensive. You're way better off spending the time and money to do #5 instead, going after the little micromarkets. There are some very talented publicists out there (thanks, Allison), but in general, see #1.
7. Think really hard before you spend a year trying to please one person in New York to get your book published by a 'real' publisher. You give up a lot of time. You give up a lot of the upside. You give up control over what your book reads like and feels like and how it's promoted. Of course, a contract from Knopf and a seat on Jon Stewart's couch are great things, but so is being the Queen of England. That doesn't mean it's going to happen to you. Far more likely is that you discover how to efficiently publish (either electronically or using POD or a small run press) a brilliant book that spreads like wildfire among a select group of people.

8. Your cover (<http://www.smallis.com/>) matters. Way more than you think. If it didn't, you wouldn't need a book... you could just email people the text.
9. If you have a 'real' publisher (#7), it's worth investing in a few things to help them do a better job for you. Like pre-editing the book before you submit it. Like putting the right to work on the cover with them in the contract. And most of all, getting the ability to buy hundreds of books at cost that you can use as samples and promotional pieces.
10. In case you skipped it, please check #2 again. That's the most important one, by far.
11. Blurbs are overrated, imho.
12. Blog mentions, on the other hand, matter a lot.
13. If you've got the patience, bookstore signings and talking to book clubs by phone are the two lowest-paid but most guaranteed to work methods you have for promoting a really really good book. If you do it 200 times a year, it will pay.
14. Consider the free PDF alternative. Some have gotten millions of downloads. No hassles, no time wasted, no trying to make a living on it. All the joy, in other words, without debating whether you should quit your day job (you shouldn't!)
15. If you want to reach people who don't normally buy books, show up in places where people who don't usually buy books are. Media places, virtual places and real places too.
16. Most books that sell by the truckload sell by the caseload. In other words, sell to organizations that buy on behalf of their members/employees.
17. Publishing a book is not the same as printing a book. Publishing is about marketing and sales and distribution and risk. If you don't want to be in that business, don't! Printing a book is trivially easy. Don't let anyone tell you it's not. You'll find plenty of printers who can match the look and feel of the bestselling book of your choice for just a few dollars a copy. That's not the hard part.
18. Bookstores, in general, are run by absolutely terrific people. Bookstores, in general, are really lousy businesses. They are often where books go to die. While some readers will discover your book in a store, it's way more likely they will discover the book before they get to the store, and the store is just there hoping to have the right book for the right person at the time she wants it. If the match isn't made, no sale.
19. Writing a book is a tremendous experience. It pays off intellectually. It clarifies your thinking. It builds credibility. It is a living engine of marketing and idea spreading, working every day to deliver your message with authority. You should write one.



Rethinking the bestseller list (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/rethinking-the-bestseller-list.html>)

January 6, 2012

A year ago, I explained why the Domino Project chose to reject (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/rejecting-the-new-york-times-bestseller-list.html>) the very broken, easily gamed *New York Times* bestseller list.

Many authors and some publishers bend over backwards, changing every element of their business just to get on the list, in the mistaken belief that it still matters. It doesn't, because shelf space and discount decisions aren't based on the list the way they used to be. Add to this the fact that recent additions to the list (it now takes up many, many pages each week) have made it almost impossible to read and understand.

The key question is this: what is the list for?

If you're a publisher, what you care about is how many books you sold last week. This isn't based on category or format, you just want to know how many. Bookscan and other data sources tell you that.

For the rest of us, then, the reason we care if something is a bestseller is because *we want to know if our friends are reading it*. We want to know this so we can stay in sync with them, not appear stupid, or, perhaps, because we trust their judgment. That's why you don't care a bit about what the bestsellers in New Zealand are.

The digital world opens a new window, something that was unknowable just five years ago. Tell me what other TED attendees are reading, please. Tell me what readers of Mother Jones or Newsmax are reading. Or what my Facebook friends bought last week. Or highlight for me what people who read what I read are finishing on their Kindles...

Suddenly, there isn't one bestseller list. There are a million. And almost all of them aren't relevant to you. Except the few that are, and those lists are the lists that matter.

This works for music, too, of course, as well as movies and even wines and restaurants.

No one has built this list yet, it is sort of showing up around the edges of a variety of sites and services and industries. A great opportunity if you can figure out the best way to source the data and then distribute it. The person who knows what's hot right now, and has permission to talk about it, has earned an asset that will be valuable for a long time.



Reading isn't dead, but it's changing (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2012/01/reading-isnt-dead-but-its-changing.html>)

January 3, 2012

What does your gut tell you about this statement: "Kids in high school read more books for fun than their parents."

In fact, it's true. Young adult reading (<http://www.mcsweeneys.net/articles/young-people-are-reading-more-than-you>) is up 20% since the last time the survey was done by the Feds, and a recent commercial survey finds the same thing.

Of course, these kids aren't reading the right books, the books we read, the *hard* books.

And go take a look at the bestseller lists for the Kindle and other e-readers. You'll see 99 cent short stories, self-published books, disgraceful genre fiction. Nothing much that was published by Knopf and others in that ilk in 1983 and is deemed literature. On the other hand, Walter Dean Myers (<http://www.walterdeanmyers.net/>) (check out this article (<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/books/walter-dean-myers-ambassador-for-young-peoples-literature.html>) on him) has known this for decades. We worked together years ago (https://www.amazon.com/SORT-SISTERS-18-Pine-Street/dp/0553297198/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1325612112&sr=1-2).

Readership of blogs is up infinity percent in the last decade (from zero), and online journals and magazines continue to gain in power and influence.

And there's more unsettling stuff being read by readers of all ages. Books that question authority and force readers to consider deeply held beliefs. The words may have gotten shorter (along with the sentences), but there's plenty of intellectual ruckus being made.

You could view this shift as the end of the world and a threat to how you publish, or you could view it as an opportunity and shift gears as quickly as you possibly can. Publish what people choose to read (at a price they want to pay), and odds are, they will choose to read it. There's plenty of room for leadership and art here, but little room for stubborn intransigence.



How the long tail cripples bonus content/multimedia (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/how-the-long-tail-cripples-bonus-contentmultimedia.html>)

December 27, 2011

The Long Tail is Chris Anderson's brilliant coinage. If you're not up to speed on it, here you go. (<https://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html>)

Well, the long tail has hit the book business, and hard. The number of ebooks published in 2012 is going to exceed a million, easily. That's more than 8 times as many books as were published to the public a year ago, and many times the number twenty years ago.

Most of those books will be in the long tail and by most economic measures, will fail. A few will end up on the short head and do just fine, thanks very much.

But what about the future of the book? When will we see books with seriously high quality embedded video, multiple endings, plot twists based on your pulse rate and significant interactive features that aren't that difficult to dream about?

Phil Simon sent along this interview (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/c-m-rubin/how-will-we-read-the-book_1_b_1163455.html) with the head of Ingram books. It's filled with breathtaking visions of the future, and they are economically ridiculous. The Long Tail creates acres of choice, so much as to make the number of options almost countless. But at the same time, it embraces (in every format) much lower production values. For what Michael Jackson and Sony paid to produce the Thriller album, today's artists can make and market more than 5,000 songs. You just can't justify spending millions of dollars to produce a record in the long tail world.

[The only reason that movies still cost so much to make is the finite number of movie screens available to the studios (this choke point enforces the scarcity of the short head). Once the world is 100% Netflix, don't expect to see many more \$200 million movies.]

The same thing that happened to music is going to be true of books. The typical ebook costs about \$10 in out of pocket expenses to write (more if you count coffee and not just pencils). But if we add in \$50,000 for app coding, \$10,000 for a director and another \$500,000 for the sort of bespoke work that was featured in Al Gore's recent 'book' (<http://pushpoppress.com/ourchoice/>), you can see the problem. The publisher will never have a chance to make this money back.

Sure, there will be experiments at the cutting edge, but no, they're not going to pay off regularly enough for it to become an industry. The quality is going to remain in the writing and in the bravery of ideas, not in teams of people making expensive digital books.

The market didn't really make a conscious choice here, but the choice has been made: it's not a few publishers putting out a few books for the masses. No, the market for the foreseeable future is a million publishers publishing to 100 million readers. Do the math. Lots of choice, not a lot of whistles. And no bells.



How much should an ebook cost? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/how-much-should-an-ebook-cost.html>)

December 20, 2011

This is the wrong question.

The right question is: How much *will* an ebook cost?

Because the answer isn't up to one author or one publisher or even a price-fixing cartel. It's up to the market, which is a far more complicated entity. There are no shoulds in the market, just reality.

On one hand, the marginal cost of delivering a single ebook is close to zero. It might cost Amazon and B&N a dime to transmit it, but it certainly costs the publisher nothing.

(People who disagree with that statement don't understand the concept of marginal cost and should look it up before participating in this discussion. Marginal cost is very different from opportunity cost or sunk cost or lost profits.)

In a market where the marginal cost is close to zero, prices tend to race to zero as well. *Except...*

Except when there are no substitutes. If you want Elvis Costello to call you on the phone and wish you a happy birthday, he can charge you whatever he wants, because even though it costs him very little, you have no alternatives. If you want Elvis, well, there's only one. Take it or leave it.

So our analysis begins with the notion that there will be at least two price points for ebooks. One will be super cheap, perhaps a dollar, for ebooks where there are substitutes. Genre fiction, diet books, manuals, instruction guides, travel books—if you can't tell them apart before you read them, then of course you should buy the cheaper one, all other things being equal (and those other things might include reviews, reputation, etc.)

But what about books where there is no obvious substitute. A Neil Gaiman book, or a Tiger Mother, or even that one Ellery Queen book you haven't read?

Here, we need to take a moment and think about the nature of a substitute. Of course, there is no substitute for Neil. On the other hand, at \$100 a book, most of us would make do and move on to our second choice. So there *is* a substitute, just not a perfect one or an easy one.

For books that come with a provenance, with a brand we seek out, I think there are again two price points. One is for the book we need to read right now, the hot one, the one for which there is buzz. These books can demand a premium and probably will. Certainly less than \$20 (a 'moral' ceiling related to the price of a paper copy) and probably more than \$10 (which is the floor set by Amazon as the price of a bestseller on the Kindle). In a moment, I'll riff on how this buzz might come to happen more productively from the point of view of the publisher.

For books that aren't hot, that aren't new or fresh or filled with buzz, it's hard for me to see how profit and volume can be maximized at a price like that. All the data I've seen and produced in experiments shows me that trial and purchase and conversion goes up significantly at less than \$10. Certainly, at zero there's a huge boost: perhaps 100 or 1,000 times as many copies a day are sold at zero than at ten dollars. While zero gets you volume, you make nothing, so that's not sustainable in the long run.

I'm guessing that the market for backlist titles where there are possible substitutes is going to settle in at \$7. Low enough to be less than \$10, to indicate that this is a bargain, at least psychically, but high enough that selling a few thousand of a five year old title is just fine.

Which leads to my guess/proposal for creating buzz, particularly for unknown authors with great books. That category (call them UAGB) is the most interesting in all of publishing, because it's about buzz and breaking open a new idea/author.

I would start those books at ZERO and raise the price a penny for every ten purchases until I got to \$15 and then hold it there for three months.

If the book really is great, the first 1000 readers (who are easy to find, because they love to read and love a bargain and have to hurry before the price exceeds a dollar) either start raving about the book or they don't. If they do, then the next few thousand readers are going to stampede along. Still a bargain, but moving fast.

Now, by the time the book hits \$15, it's been read by 15,000 people (understand, please, that in the book business, 15,000 readers in a week is a national bestseller, a huge hit), and you've just created a new must-read author.

That means that pricing of the future looks like:

Zero: promo titles

\$1: backlist service titles, useful but not irreplaceable

\$7: backlist titles from authors you love

\$15: current bestsellers

There's probably no form of media that has as much history of crazy pricing as books. There are \$100 art books on the bestseller lists and 3 cent Chick tracts handed out every Sunday. Most of this is related to the fact that the marginal cost of a printed book varies so much (records, movies and videogames vary not at all). Now that books are entering the same space as these other sorts of media, expect that the pricing follows suit.



Fake books (<https://www.thedomino.com/2011/12/fake-books.html>)

December 16, 2011

When anyone can publish a book, anyone will.

Including people who will collect up public domain articles, paste them into Word and hit publish.

And people who will use keywords to trick you into thinking a book is about something it isn't.

Of course, there have been counterfeit handbags for sale on the streets of New York for decades. The difference? We trust books. Books are special.

The giant risk (okay, it's not a risk, it's a certainty) of the long tail ebook revolution is that without enforced curation due to scarcity, the average quality is going to plummet (it has to) and the risk of buying a bogus book goes way up.

One outcome of this shift will be a new set of cues. We'll look a lot harder for reviews and cover art and inbound links before we get tricked. Which is a loss of innocence, no doubt.

Reader, beware.

The Domino Project Announces: "Poke the Box" Business Wire 2011, Feb 1

Description

Bestselling author and creator of new publishing venture "The Domino Project," Seth Godin, and Amazon announce their inaugural book "Poke the Box" to be published in English worldwide as print, audio and Kindle editions

(<https://www.thedomino.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/fake-bio-for-poke.jpg>)

Here's the bogus description for a book that pretends to be Poke the Box. Shame on them.



Who wants to break the Internet? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/who-wants-to-break-the-internet.html>)

December 13, 2011

It's not the struggling artists, it's corporations, lawyers and boards who are in favor of such a shortsighted law. Here's the list of companies behind one of the lobbying groups pushing for SOPA (here (<https://boingboing.net/2011/12/05/copyrights-vs-human-rights-bi.html>) are three (http://www.avc.com/a_vc/2011/11/american-censorship-day.html) links (<https://boingboing.net/2011/12/02/stephen-colbert-explains-sopa.html>) about the law). Now you know who to call:

ABC

AFTRA – American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

AFM – American Federation of Musicians

AAP – Association of American Publishers

ASCAP

BMG Chrysalis

BMI

CBS Corporation

Cengage Learning

DGA – Directors Guild of America

Disney Publishing Worldwide, Inc.

EMI Music Publishing

ESPN

Graphic Artists Guild

Hachette Book Group

HarperCollins Publishers L.L.C.

Hyperion

IATSE – International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, its Territories and Canada

International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Kaufman Astoria Studios

Macmillan

Major League Baseball

Marvel Entertainment, LLC

McGraw-Hill Education

MPA – The Association of Magazine Media

NFL – National Football League
National Music Publishers' Association
NBCUniversal
News Corporation
New York Production Alliance
New York State AFL-CIO
Pearson Education
Penguin Group (USA), Inc.
The Perseus Books Group
Producers Guild of America East
Random House
Reed Elsevier
SAG – Screen Actors Guild
Scholastic, Inc.
Silvercup Studios
Simon & Schuster, Inc.
Sony Music Entertainment
Sony/ATV Music Publishing
Time Warner Inc.
United States Tennis Association
Universal Music Group
Universal Music Publishing Group
Viacom
Warner Music Group
W.W. Norton & Company
Wolters Kluwer



Amazon's #1 bestselling business book of the year
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/the-1-best-selling-business-book-of-the-year-on-amazon.html>)

December 12, 2011

Amazon just released their list of the top-selling 100 books of 2011.

Thanks to you, *Poke the Box*

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719002/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) came in around 65 on the list, which was led by Steve Jobs, filled with fiction and the occasional kid's book.

It's on sale right now for \$5

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719002/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) in hardcover, but not sure for how long.

The Flinch (<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch-ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S>), which is free, has been in the top 50 since it was released on the Kindle (easy to read on your computer or iPad too).

You can find the entire final line-up **right here** (<http://www.squidoo.com/the-dominoproject>).

Thanks!



It might stick with you (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/it-might-stick-with-you.html>)

December 7, 2011

Today Domino is publishing a free book, something worth your time and attention.

The Flinch (https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch-ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4) is by Julien Smith, co-author (with Chris Brogan) of the bestselling *Trust Agents*.

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0470635495/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>)

If you hurry, you can get your copy of *The Flinch* at no charge for Kindles in the USA (and Australia and the Netherlands). Other territories may follow, though your mileage may vary.

This ebook is short, fast, raw, compelling, sometimes infuriating. Look Julien in the eye and you can see the passion boiling just barely under the surface. *The Flinch* challenges what we might be afraid of, and calls out the reader (every reader) to learn something about what we hold ourselves away from.

If it resonates with you, I hope you'll share this link and the book with those who can benefit from it.

One of the goals of any project is to leave a legacy, to add some bricks to the road that got you here. I'm hoping that taken as a set, the books that the Domino Project (<http://www.squidoo.com/the-domino-project>) brought to you (along with our brave, tireless, brilliant authors) will stick with you and be worth spreading and re-reading. (PS yet another top five bestseller. Thanks guys).



(<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch->

[ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4))



Two bargains (quick) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/two-bargains-quick.html>)

December 5, 2011

Yes, it's possible to deliver a paper book for less than \$20.

For the next two hours, the Zig Ziglar goal planner

(<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719215?smid=ATVPDKIKX0DER>) is 75% off (~~\$10 for four books~~) [alas, time expired... but thanks, and it's still half off for now]

And Poke the Box

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719002/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) is \$5 each in hardcover. Not sure how long that lasts.

Buy a bunch. Hug an elf.



Selling vs. reading (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/12/selling-vs-reading.html>)

December 3, 2011

Back when the only way to get someone to read your work was to get them to actually buy your work first, a focus on selling and a focus on being read were the same thing.

Paper cost money. You need to sell the book if you want someone to read it, so feel free to spend all your time persuading people to *buy* it.

In the digital world, there's a little bit of bluff calling going on. If the cost of delivering one more copy of the book is zero, then choosing to sell your work is optional. You might choose to work hard merely to get people to *read* your work, leaving money out of the equation.

Money cuts both ways, of course. If someone pays for your book, perhaps they'll take it more seriously, focus a bit more energy on it. If your book is easy to get and find and discard, perhaps it's not valued as highly. On the other hand, it will certainly spread faster.

Too many choices, no doubt.

But the real question remains: **are you writing to be read, or are you writing to get paid?** They are becoming ever more divergent paths, with gradations (\$6? \$9?) in between.

(An example of this is the publishers and authors that oppose libraries and the lending of ebooks. In these cases, even though money was paid, they're apparently against being read—even though there's zero evidence that library reading hurts book sales.)



Sarah Kay update (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/sarah-kay-update.html>)

November 30, 2011

Thanks to you, since Monday, Sarah's new book (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1612182798/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) has been the #1 bestselling poetry book.

If you received your copy and it moved you, feel free to head over and post a review. My goal is for every mom, sister and daughter to get one this season as a bonus gift, sort of a hug on paper.

To every one of you who have supported (and shared) our books (<http://www.squidoo.com/the-domino-project>), thank you.



Why publish poetry? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/why-publish-poetry.html>)

November 28, 2011

Sarah Kay's astonishing poem in hardcover.

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1612182798/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>)

I'm still amazed at this extraordinary young woman and her talent. As a teenager, she bootstrapped her way onto the stage at poetry jams in New York, and then, before the age most people get a clue, she earned not one but two standing ovations at TED, turning her poem into a worldwide sensation.

As soon as I heard it, I wanted to make it into something physical, shareable, and shelveable. I wanted to give every person with a mom or a sister or a friend a chance to share it. Sarah and her friend Sophia spent months working with Alex on a book format that is quietly elegant.

I hope you'll enjoy watching the video, sharing it and ordering a few of the hardcover. After you read it, I think you'll see why my little publishing company broke yet another one of our rules and published a short book of poetry.

If I should have a daughter ... | Sarah Kay





Updating page a day (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/updating-page-a-day.html>)

November 25, 2011

For a decade or more, the page a day calendar was a cultural force, a lot of fun and really profitable.

Little calendars that sat on every desk, entertaining us with Gary Larson cartoons or the quote of the day.

My brainstorm is pretty simple: use an app to take over the screen saver/lock page of the Kindle or iPad and it's a new kind of page a day—call it a screen a day. I first thought of this for desktop computers 15 years ago, but it was hard to sell an app then...

I'm not sure why Apple and Amazon won't open this valuable real estate to content providers and developers who can use it effectively, but they should.

We wrote out and defined an entire spec—it could include the current time, updates of your upcoming calendar commitments... along with the quote or the word of the day (depending on what service you signed up for) or a cartoon or a bit of trivia. Hey, it could even act like PointCast and bring current news or fresh content to the screensaver.

You could license various sources of content (cartoons, quotes, game shows) and even have sponsored versions.

Just imagine how proud you'd feel when your iPad fell out of your bag and there, on the screen saver, was your Sartre quote of the day. And unlike the paper page a day calendars, this format doesn't go out of date, isn't expensive to produce (once the app is built), lends itself to the long tail of varied interests and is a truly useful tool.

We were unable to get the access we needed to build this out, but perhaps someone with better timing will pull it off. Have fun with it.



Seth and Leo (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/seth-and-leo.html>)

November 17, 2011

A juicy interview with lots of learnings (is learnings a word?) about the Domino Project and the book business, happily shared.

(Skype is a miracle, but the quality is a little variable, sorry).

<http://zenhabits.net/seth/> (<http://zenhabits.net/seth/>)



Shovelware—it's time to rate publishers

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/shovelware-its-time-to-rate-publishers.html>)

November 4, 2011

Now that shelf space is infinite, now that ebooks take up no room and every seller of them has an incentive to have a nearly infinite selection, the inevitable next step shows up:

When anyone can publish a book, anyone will.

Far worse than the individuals publishing junk, though are organizations generating literally thousands of books that no one would happily buy if they knew what was in them.

These books are created by shoveling public domain content, often from Wikipedia, with no human intervention, no care, no attention to detail into ebooks. Worse, they are then mislabeled as something that feels like a pirated book or an interesting collection of essays.

While some bloggers have been doing this for a decade, surfing a blog is free and it's fast. Buying an ebook is neither.

The real losers here, in addition to the ripped off readers (and the writers (<http://whatever.scalzi.com/2011/11/04/beware-the-wikipedia-scrappers/>) who are having their names stolen), are the ebook platforms themselves. Once the Nook and the Kindle get a reputation as dark alleys filled with mislabeled junk, it will be hard to erase.

If it were me running the store, I'd delete every single book from a publisher caught with junk like this. And I'd figure out how to rate not just authors, but publishers

(https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=ntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&sort=relevancerank&search-alias=books&field-author=Hephaestus%20Books), so it's not so easy for someone to show up and steal a brand and disappoint a customer.

Tracking an idea (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/11/tracking-an-idea.html>)

November 3, 2011

I spent an hour today tracking the trajectory of an idea spreading, and there's plenty to learn.

The New York Times is featuring an article by Christopher McDougall in Sunday's magazine (keyed around the NY Marathon).

The article (https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/06/magazine/running-christopher-mcdougall.html?_r=1) is a punchy piece about how to run better, without pain.

A few things to note already:

a. The Times still has the power to authenticate and launch an idea. Their permission base is large, and the people who read it, particularly those that read it online, are eager spreaders of ideas.

b. McDougall is a fabulous writer and his earlier book (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0307279189/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) about barefoot running is as good (and as well received) as any non-fiction writer can dream of.

c. The promise of his article is a huge one, almost as big as the "lose weight without going hungry" promise. Virtually all runners want to learn to run without pain, and Christopher pulls no punches.

d. One of my favorite parts is his discovery of a secret a hundred years old, found in an out of print book. We should have known it all along! This is almost a good a promise as, "breathtaking new discovery." Both of these promises absolve the reader of blame for not already knowing the answer.

As a result of these four factors, the story rocketed to #1 among the most emailed stories (<https://www.nytimes.com/most-popular-emailed>) in the entire paper. This list is so important it has been parodied (<http://www.theawl.com/2011/01/the-most-emailed-new-york-times-article-ever>), and writers and editors at the Times are obsessed with it. It (not the paper) is what indicates that a story has broken and is making an impact.

Less publicized but fascinating to watch is Chris teaching the technique at the offices of the paper. The video (<http://video.nytimes.com/video/2011/11/02/magazine/100000001149415/the-lost-secret-of-running.html>) captures a brilliant salesperson at work. Note the word "foolproof" used

more than once. His enthusiasm, confidence and willingness to share (he's got nothing to sell) is literally breathtaking. I'm sold.

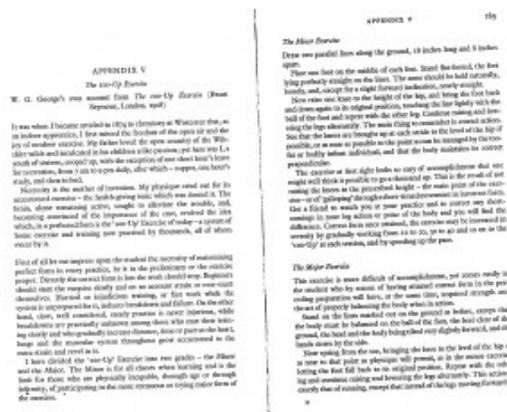
And so I did a Google books search to find the ancient secret, to see it at its source. And now the story of stories spreading collides with copyright law. The book (<http://peterlovesey.com/the-kings-of-distance>) is out of print. You can't buy it (I think I grabbed the last (<http://www.abebooks.com/9780312294847/Five-Kings-Distance-Lovesey-Peter-0312294840/plp>) out of print copy at a reasonable price on AbeBooks, a sale for which the author (a mystery writer!) gets no royalties.) Update: my order just bounced... someone paid more than me, I guess. No book, alas.

Even though it's not available for sale, it's also not available to look at. The publisher has hidden the good pages, for a reason I don't understand. Free the orphaned works!

Watching the idea go from notion to article to video to emailed to Google books to AbeBooks to wherever, is like seeing a perfectly skipped stone glide across a lake. Every time it will follow a different path, but there are commonalities—and the three big ones are a fabulous idea, a compelling salesperson and a media channel that enables that idea to spread.

The punchline of the story should be that Chris and Peter will collaborate to create a thirty page Kindle book that will be on sale in a week for \$5. He'd sell a hundred thousand if he hurried.

BONUS! Here are two of the missing pages, out of copyright since they were published in 1908. Thanks to AB for sharing them.



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/100uppart1.jpg>)

Alternative literature (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/alternative-literature.html>)

October 31, 2011

Web comic artist, Randall Munroe has a great cartoon (<https://xkcd.com/971/>) up today.

Of course, the cartoon isn't about books, it's about provenance, marketing and how we interpret things based on where they come from. And it's about the ethics of selling something that pretends to do something it isn't. (Hint: check the title of the post).

When you put something into a powerful wrapper, you own the responsibility for what it does and what it pretends to do, and books are the most powerful wrapper available to most of us that would dare to write for others to read.



The illusion of patronage (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/the-illusion-of-patronage.html>)

October 26, 2011

Many successful, serious authors are in love with the notion that they get to be serious and successful merely by writing.

There was a brief interlude, perhaps 50 years in all post-Gutenberg, in which it was possible for a talented writer to be chosen, anointed, edited, promoted and paid for her work. Where the 'work' refers to the writing.

This idea that JD Salinger could hide out in his cabin, write, and periodically cash royalty checks is now dying.

Authors of the future are small enterprises, just one person or perhaps two or three. But they include fan engagement specialists, licensors, new media development managers, public speakers, endorsement and bizdev VPs, and more.

No one has your back.

Sad but true. The author of today (and tomorrow) is either going to build and maintain and work with his tribe or someone is going to take it away.

That whole thing with the Medicis didn't last forever either.



Paying for first (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/paying-for-first.html>)

October 22, 2011

Here's a bit of speculation:

Soon, there will be three kinds of books on the Kindle.

\$1.99 ebooks. This is the clearing price for virtually all ebooks going forward.

\$5 ebooks. This is the price for bestsellers, hot titles and books you have no choice but to buy because they were assigned in school.

\$10 ebooks. This is the price you will pay to get the book first, to get it fast, to get it before everyone else. There might even be a subset of books for \$20 in this category.

For example the new Steve Jobs book. The only reason it wasn't onsale two weeks ago is that the publisher needed to move tons of molecules from the printer to the store. That means ebook readers have been waiting so that the paper readers could get their copy.

The analogy is paperback and hardcover. You paid extra for the hardcover because it was first and because it was a classy thing to display on the wall. A year later, the very same book is half the price or less as a paperback.

One of the unused features of digital ebooks is that the price can change easily, daily, by volume and by demand.

Starting soon, you'll pay extra for the hot, fresh ebook (at \$20, the publisher can do quite well for two weeks while we wait for the hardcover, thanks very much) and you'll pay a lot less when it's on the clearance rack.



The one page book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/the-one-page-book.html>)

October 19, 2011

Domino is publishing *Death and Taxes*

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1612182046/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) today.

Up until now, there hasn't been an effective distribution method for posters like this. A store needs to keep them in a tube, and without being able to stare at it, it's hard to tell you want one.

The notion that a book can hang on the wall, something you can study and remind yourself of... it makes it easier to spread the idea than if it's on your bookshelf, and you don't have to loan it out for someone to get the idea.

I can imagine all sorts of fascinating, educational and provocative ideas one could cram into 864 square inches. One notion we played with was creating a scroll, a megillah, something 24 inches high and 60 or 80 inches long—the history of the world, perhaps, or the chronology of Harry Potter's life.

Check it out.



What talent wants (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/what-talent-wants.html>)

October 14, 2011

There are countless new publishers being created. Online podcasts, talk shows, ebook publishers, new kinds of film studios and record labels—all of them need talent.

Here's a four word acronym of what talent wants (along with two things it no longer needs)

MONEY: This is the easiest one, because it's simple to measure. When in doubt, pay an advance or a fee. When a publisher gives an author \$850,000 for her next book, they have earned the right to call the shots. While this is clearly easy, you can see how difficult this is to pull off in a long-tail, moving-toward-free world

UBIQUITY: In an economy based on attention, the publisher that can offer talent a large platform has a significant edge. The reason virtually no one turned down Oprah during her reign was simple—she guaranteed the largest possible audience, and she delivered it every single day. This is why a permission asset—a list of customers/listeners/readers just waiting to pay attention—is at the core of the publishing proposition.

STRUCTURE/SUCCOR/STANDARDS: Talent often looks for someone who will care, raise the bar, shepherd the work, challenge and generally make the good, great. This is why stories of great editors are legendary. Charlie Rose and Woody Allen both get talent for cheap for this very reason. Make a project interesting enough and talent will be interested.

EGO: Rare indeed is a talented person uninterested in what the world thinks. If they're out there, you probably haven't heard of them. Writers want to win a Pulitzer, and jugglers want Ed Sullivan to tell them they did a great job. Hollywood publishers are fabulous at this. Producers and executives spend most of their time engaging with the talent early and often and bringing them feedback or control or interesting challenges—the things that drive better work.

The TED conference, then, thrives as a publisher (even though they don't pay a penny to the talent) because they bring a huge audience via video, they insist on extraordinary presentations (and work with the speakers to get it) and most of all, because there is a prestigious audience, a group the talent would like to consider its peers, just waiting to give a standing ovation and make connections for future projects.

The two letters missing from the acronym now turn MUSE into MUSEUM (sorry, couldn't help it).

UMBRELLA: Talent has often avoided the vanity press, the self-published route, the notion that it's okay to pick one's self. It was unseemly. You looked for cover, for an umbrella to protect you from the criticism that you weren't good enough to be chosen. I think there are enough extraordinary successes in every field that this is clearly no longer the case.

MECHANICS: It used to be that the most obvious role of the publisher was to handle mundane, expensive and challenging tasks like printing, binding, shipping, accounting, venue arrangements, film developing, carriage, etc. All of these elements are diminished in the digital world—some are still important, but most are easily outsourced by the talent if she chooses. It's not enough, and those that can only do this are left resorting to money as an inducement, which doesn't really scale.

The publishing landscape is being completely reshaped—in just about every medium. The next generation will replace this when they get ever better at at least three of the four things talent wants.



October 10, 2011

This is the dark secret of the book industry, and one of the new truths of the music business.

Every year, total book sales have been relatively flat, growing just a bit.

But, the price of books has been rising, so that means that unit sales, the number of books sold, is flatter still.

Missing from this analysis: the number of books published each year is going up, and fast. And with ebooks taking off, the number of books published is about to go up by a factor of 100.

Think about it: anyone with an essay, a collection of thoughts, a tumblr that's been running for a while... you can turn those into a nationally distributed ebook in about fifteen minutes.

And when everyone is rushing to increase supply along the long tail, it doesn't matter if a publisher decides to hold back and publish fewer titles—the public doesn't know who publishes what and doesn't really care.

The end result, I predict, is that sales per book published are going to decrease as much as 20% next year. Sure, there are plenty of hits left to happen, and the short head of the bestseller list is going to be a good place to be for a while to come. But the midlist (which means most books) is going to see sales per book go down. And keep going down.

Good for people who like to discover interesting ideas. Bad for people who publish them the traditional way.



Our latest manifesto



(<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch->

[ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4))

What is The Domino Project?

The Domino Project is named after the domino effect—one powerful idea spreads down the line, pushing from person to person. Learn more → ([/about](#))

Archives

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THE
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IDEAS THAT SPREAD, WIN.

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/>)

Part of the pack (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/part-of-the-pack.html>)

October 7, 2011

Non-fiction authors and journalists often travel in packs. An idea comes up, it feels safe, editors assign it, publishers acquire it and the pack heads in.

You've seen the scrum of 30 or 40 photographers in front of a house, all taking the same picture. You've probably read more trivializing and insensitive Steve Jobs stories in one day that you can handle. Yesterday, I heard a public speaker begin a story with, "I actually lived down the street from him" (he then confessed that they'd never met). Enough!

Great writing rarely comes from simply following the trend of the moment.



In pursuit of strangers (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/10/in-pursuit-of-strangers.html>)

October 5, 2011

You can see the marketing problem of every business just by glancing at the plight of the typical author.

Once a year, once every other year, he has to come out of his university office/hovel/apartment/rural enclave and go on the road. He has to do Leonard Lopate and the Today show, a spate of blogs, book readings, Tedx appearances and sleep on whatever couch he can find, use whatever media will have him.

Why?

To reach strangers. To reach people who, if they only knew about the book, would gladly buy it, read it, share it, listen to it, download it.

Selling a book to friends is a totally different story. You send an email to your fans and you're done. You blog it on your blog or tweet about it once or twice and you're done.

Selling to strangers... that's getting harder and harder and less effective every day.



Weird excerpt (and teleconference) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/weird-excerpt-and-teleconference.html>)

September 30, 2011

[The call was great (though the recording isn't so loud... here's the mp3 file (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/road_trip_goodies/2011/10/podcast-from-the-weird-teleconference.html)]

Here's an excerpt:

Origins of dominion

Someone always wants to be in charge.

But how?

The long-term plan is to train people to accept someone giving them orders. Sure, we can resort to physical force, but the arithmetic doesn't support asymmetry. If you need one foreman for every subject, you're not going to be able to scale. And actual restraints and fear for one's physical safety are not effective motivators. Instead, dominators have long created cultural norms that dictate that the lower class (as defined by the upper class) should obey their superiors.

For thousands of years, leaders have enforced their rule by telling us stories and selling us on the idea of compliance.

The stories in all ancient mythologies revolve around powerful gods that told humans what to do—and those gods were ignored at the peril of one's life.

I don't think it's an accident that these stories were invented and then reinforced and amplified by human leaders. They push the population to accept "normal" and they encourage peer pressure to comply. If effective society is defined as people accepting authority, then everyone in the society has an incentive to enforce the rule of just a few.

So emperors and princes and then kings like Louis XIV pushed forward this idea of normal, of being an insider, of doing what you were told.

Marketers, discovering a good thing, joined in. By doing the only commercially viable thing (marketing to the middle of the curve), they unintentionally latched on to this old idea of pushing society to the middle. As democracy created positions of power for the elected, these newly elected leaders did the same thing. They campaigned to the middle and thus had an incentive to push society in their direction.

Today we can see that the post-industrial age and the Internet permit a different sort of power, one of silos and smaller but tighter networks. Now, there's an incentive to fragment instead of coalesce. And given the choice, given the chance to be weird, more and more of us are taking that chance.

Sure, there are traditionalists in the center, ranting and pushing and haranguing society to get back to the good old days, to the days of compliance. There are Supreme Court justices willing to criminalize behaviors they consider weird. There are corporations who fire employees for speaking up. There are even dictators who imprison someone worthy of a Nobel Peace Prize.

The reactionaries that demand compliance, though, face an uphill battle. They will have a hard time becoming Torquemada in Spain, 1492; they will have a hard time enforcing a rigid status quo when ideas are easier to spread, mobility is easier to find, and marketers find profits in niches, not mass...

Is there any doubt at all that we're going to get weirder?

[Here's a review from Barry Moltz (<http://www.openforum.com/articles/conformity-is-dead-make-money-marketing-to-weirdos>) on the Amex site]



Want to buy a watch? Patronage, scarcity and souvenirs
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/want-to-buy-a-watch-patronage-scarcity-and-souvenirs.html>)

September 28, 2011

A hundred years ago, if you wanted to know what time it was, you had to make a significant investment—in a watch.

Twenty years ago, Timex made it clear that if you merely wanted the time (not jewelry) it would be about \$15.

And five years ago, every kid with a cell phone got the time as a free bonus.

And yet there are still watchmakers. Still Rolex and Patek and the rest. Some of them are having great years.

Clearly, they don't sell the time. They sell jewelry. Exclusivity. A souvenir.

One reason to buy a watch (or a book) is because you want to possess it, show it off, give it to your grandchildren. Holding a book is a luxury, one for which you pay a premium. There are few books that contain information unavailable anywhere else, and fewer still that can't be bought more cheaply and easily as an ebook.

In the non-fiction category, the reasons to buy a book are smaller still. With a novel or a significant work of non-fiction research, the book itself might be part of what you're paying for. In a busy universe, though, if all you want is information, you can probably find it faster and cheaper without the book part coming along for the ride.

And so 90% of the people who read my blog don't buy my books, figuring that they can get the information (or at least enough information) for free. This is as big a change as the time-keeping change that rocked the watch world. You no longer have to pay a book toll to get information.

Sam Harris is worried (<http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/the-future-of-the-book/>) that this means the end of authors. At some level he's correct: the lack of a barrier means the number of authors is skyrocketing, yet the sales per author are going down. eBook distribution means that everyone can be everywhere, but it also means that more choice generates less income for each writer.

It's as if the watch business had 100,000 competitors in it.

Patronage is one answer. The way it makes you feel to put a dollar in the busker's guitar case, or to buy a CD even though you know how to listen for free. I get pleasure out of buying books, I like supporting the genre (even though the vast majority of the money I spend goes nowhere near the

person who took the creative risks). Patronage, though, doesn't make an industry work.

No, the future of books lies in amateur authors, together with the few superstars with a big enough tribe or a big enough reputation to earn significant advances and royalties. (And yes, a 'middle class' of authors with a big enough tribe to make a living, but nowhere near what it takes to make it big.) The big middle, though, the writers who earned enough on tolls—those guys are in big trouble long term. As Esther Dyson predicted fifteen years ago, they are going to have to become troubadors again, traveling, selling live events, doing speeches, etc.

You don't have to like it but that's how it's sorting out. Anyone know what time it is?



How many covers? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/how-many-covers.html>)

September 22, 2011

“I'll take mine swami-side up...”

The hardcover edition of *We Are All Weird*

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719223/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) has two covers. You can take off the paper dust jacket, turn it over, refold it and put it back on. Voila, a new front cover and back cover.

Some people were concerned that my original cover wouldn't accomplish my goal—to emphasize how important it is to engage with people who aren't in the center of the market. Doing business with others, even those that mass marketers consider weird, is to treat them with respect, to give them the dignity of choice. The inspiration for the book is the swami on the real cover—he lives with very few possessions, teaching and inspiring residents of his small village outside Bareilly, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India.

Given the chance to replace his dirty and dangerous kerosene lantern with a solar one, he jumped at it. This choice of his gave him power—the power to say no (or yes) and determine how he'll spend his time and his money. We deprive people of this dignity every day (the dignity of choice), but by opening doors and seeing, actually seeing, people as they are, we can empower them to live as they choose.

It's so easy for a mass marketer, a mass merchant, a mass manufacturer or a mass government to exclude those that are different, that might gum up the works or not fit a particular vision of normal. Normal is over. I hope the cover (both covers, actually) communicates that.

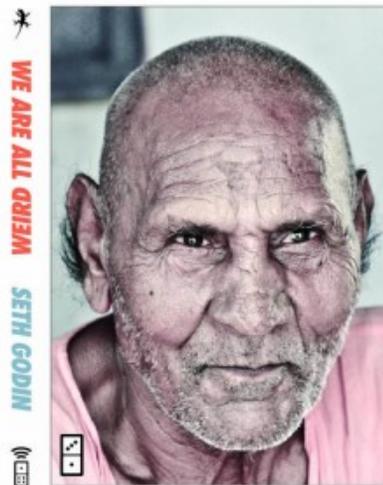
The ebook edition could have as many covers as you like, of course. The standard has been set at one, but I'm not sure that's a good idea. I love the back covers of real books, and I wonder why ebooks don't have them.

Go ahead and invent your own cover if you like. Weird is everywhere you look, even the mirror.



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/displayweirdcover.jpg>)

The official cover, the one on the outside



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/swamionly.jpg>)

Swami-side up



My new book: We Are All Weird (limited edition) on sale now
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/we-are-all-weird-limited-edition-on-sale-now.html>)

September 21, 2011

Special alert for Domino readers...

My new book, *We Are All Weird*

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719223/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) goes on sale today. We only have 11,000 hardcover copies on sale at Amazon, with no plans to print more. I wanted you to have first dibs. (PS, Outside the USA? [click here](#)).

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com//the-joy-and-madness-of-simultaneous-publication>)

Why limit the number printed?

Conventional publishing wisdom says that the first 10,000 copies are the hardest. In fact, you don't make money until after that. The goal is to prime the pump and then, if you get lucky, sell millions and millions of hardcovers, day after day, year after year. That's what pays the bills at all the large publishing houses.

The thing is, digital is better at infinity than paper ever will be. Digital is easy to keep in stock, easy to replenish, easy to connect with. Paper, on the other hand, benefits from scarcity. If you know that there are only a few books and then they're gone, you're more likely to hurry up, more likely to grab yours now, more likely to treasure it once you get it. And in a digital world, a book that's not worth treasuring is not worth owning, is it?

So the bet I'm making is that the scarcity of the hardcover will help you decide to read it right now. And I hope you will, because this is one of the most important books I've ever written. And then, after you read it, I hope you'll share the ideas, perhaps loan your copy or encourage a friend to get the free Kindle reader (https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=amb_link_352814002_3?ie=UTF8&docId=1000493771&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=center-6&pf_rd_r=1164HC7Y29916VGER1K6&pf_rd_t=1401&pf_rd_p=1279039382&pf_rd_i=1000426311) and get the Kindle edition (https://www.amazon.com/We-Are-All-Weird-ebook/dp/B005G5DSLW/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1316434796&sr=8-1) for herself.

If the hardcover is gone by the time you read this, I apologize, we did our best to guess how many would satisfy the first wave of interest. I think it's inevitable that publishing is going to move in this direction—hardcover collectibles for those that want them, digital for those in search of the ideas.

Thanks as always for helping with these experiments in the form and content of publishing.

And tweet away at **#weirddomino**. Summary of a lot of this right here.

(<http://www.squidoo.com/we-are-all-weird>)

[Interesting aside: the scarcity of the book is changing the way I'm interacting with it. Usually, I hand out books like candy, because I can always get more. I'm feeling mysteriously scrooge-like now, though, wondering if someone is hardcover-worthy. Just like concert tickets to a sold out show, things feel different when there's a limit.]



Resources for authors (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/resources-for-authors.html>)

September 15, 2011

I've worked with some great people in building out the Domino Project, and some of them are now accepting independent authors as clients. I have no idea if they've got enough bandwidth to help you with your project, but I wanted to let you know about them. They're not cheap, but they're a bargain.

Alex Miles Younger (<http://www.alexmilesyounger.com/>) worked with me on the design and production of all of our books.

Willie Jackson (<https://williejackson.com/>) built this blog as well as the fabulous endmalariaday site. He's flexible and his sites are fast.

And Ishita Gupta (<http://www.ishitagupta.com/>) is doing coaching and hoopla for a tiny cadre of authors that want to make an impact.



I might not be an author (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/i-might-not-be-an-author.html>)

September 12, 2011

The Author's Guild is suing (<http://m.paidcontent.org/article/419-authors-to-universities-give-up-your-google-books/>) the University of Michigan and other college libraries because of their selfish, heinous plan to digitize and freely share old books for which authors cannot be found.

The Author's Guild, which does not speak for me, nor for any author I know or possibly have ever met, says (https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CCEQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.authorsguild.org%2Fadvocacy%2Farticles%2Fauthors-3.attachment%2Fag-v-um-et-al-final-8645%2FAG%2520v.%2520UM%2520et%2520al.%2520FINAL%2520COMPLAINT.pdf&rct=j&q=%E2%80%9Cpotentially%20catastrophic%2C%20widespread%20dissemination%E2%80%9D&ei=kKduTuC1MYrpgAe7yKyUCQ&usg=AFQjCNGwSml-weWyVtmAbgcuPIM1pQ732w&sig2=74Dm_NzpqU94UXIuVVq6iA&cad=rja) that this plan could lead to a “potentially catastrophic, widespread dissemination” of books.

Catastrophic?

It's catastrophic to share dusty books for which the author cannot be found? Why?

Either books are a cultural treasure, part of our heritage and discourse and worthy of discussion, or they are merely a way to make a living. If being an author means that you view the distribution of your work (after you're so far gone as to be unfindable) as catastrophic, I'm probably not an author.

Count me out.



Tote bag marketing, books and sneakers (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/tote-bag-marketing-books-and-sneakers.html>)

September 9, 2011

Not sure if you've seen the auction Nike (<http://nikemag.ebay.com/shoes>) is doing to raise money for Michael J. Fox's foundation that researches for a cure for Parkinsons.

1,500 pair of shoes were made based on the futuristic sneakers he wore in the original Back to the Future movie. So far, typical bids are around \$4,000 a pair, and it's certainly going to go up as the auction goes on. Figure they'll raise \$10,000,000, easily. Good for them.

The interesting lesson for me is that this fundraiser is 100% about the shoes. The charity is an asterisk. This is a branding and nostalgia exercise, with the opportunity for resale at a profit thrown in as a bonus. Tote bag marketing (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2011/09/tote-bag-marketing.html), without a doubt. The lesson for fundraisers everywhere is: if you have

something like a celebrity shoe or a signed Chuck Close

(<http://artistsforhaiti.com/site/artists/chuck-close/>) painting to sell, you should definitely go do that. The ends are fabulous, and there's nothing wrong with the means to get there.

My cavil is that what we're undermarketing is the pleasure (and I use the word carefully) of doing something for others. Our culture's marketing mantra is rarely about *them*, it's almost always about *us*. Us sells far better. I don't think that's genetic, I think it's a learned instinct.

Conventional wisdom says that if we had piled on hundreds of dollars of coupons and bonuses and special access, we certainly would have sold more copies of End Malaria

(<https://www.amazon.com/End-Malaria-Michael-Bungay-Stanier/dp/1936719282>). The amazing news: I'm thrilled that we've already raised about a quarter of a million dollars (after just 2 days) thanks to readers like you as well as our generous sponsors (<http://www.endmaliaday.com>). We didn't sell that many copies because of what the business community was getting, we sold them because of what you wanted to give. It doesn't hurt that what you got was amazing, and a bargain, and worth sharing, but that's not why you bought it. You bought it because of the way it made you feel to give.

Thanks.



This ebook isn't free (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/09/this-ebook-isnt-free.html>)

September 7, 2011

In fact, it costs *double* the standard amount.

Over the last few months, alert readers of the Domino Project blog have gotten a ton of free ebooks, each a bestseller, each worth reading and sharing.

You don't owe us anything for that. The exchange was obvious—your attention and goodwill and willingness to share made it worth the author and the sponsor giving a free ebook to you.

No, you don't owe us anything.

But you do owe the kids something. The kids around the world who die every single day from malaria. For no good reason other than a lack of a malaria net.

Today, 61 amazing authors (and me) are publishing an important new book, a book about great work and finding insight and making a difference. It's a bargain at \$20 for the Kindle (https://www.amazon.com/End-Malaria-ebook/dp/B005CKBF4I/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2) edition and \$25 for the paperback (https://www.amazon.com/End-Malaria-Michael-Bungay-Stanier/dp/1936719282/ref=tmm_pap_title_0) (international pricing and availability varies, as always).

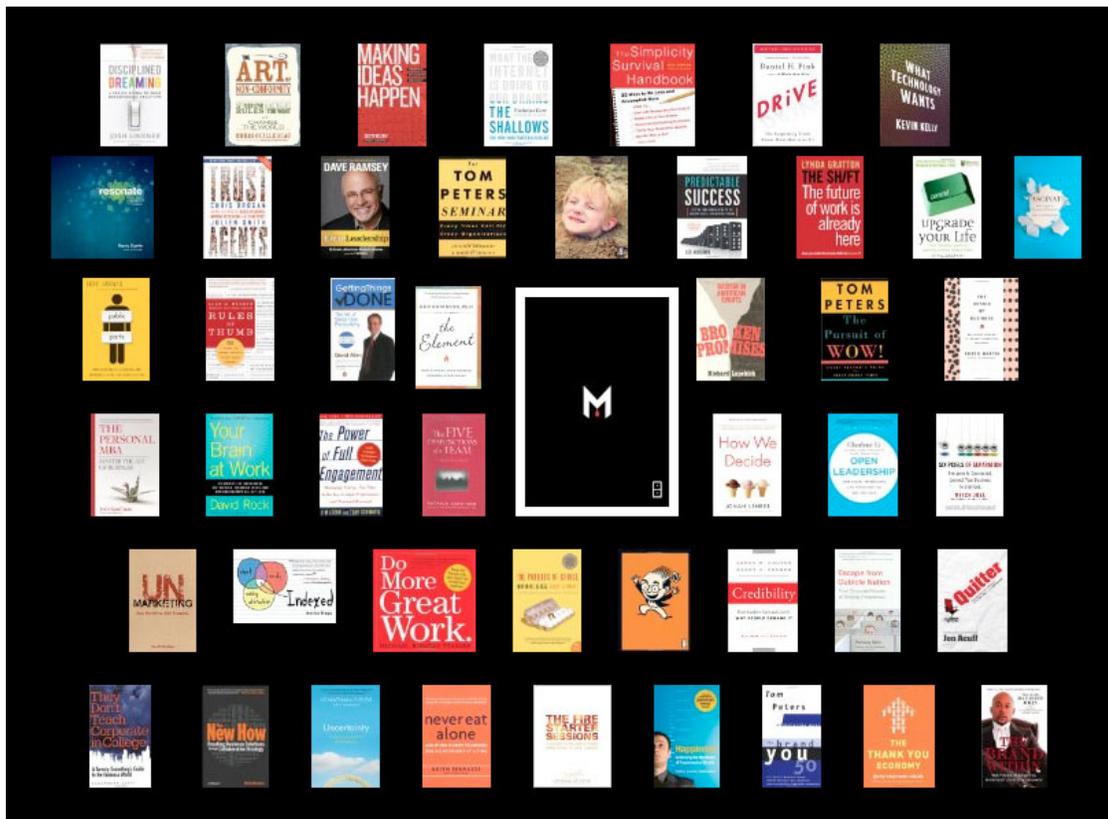
But of course, there are plenty of great books (<http://www.squidoo.com/endmalaria-authors>) to choose from. You probably own a few books you haven't read yet. The fact that this is a great book is not why you should buy a copy right now.

You should buy a copy because today is End Malaria Day (<http://www.endmaliaday.com>), and because we're donating \$20 from the sale of every copy in any format to Malaria No More (<http://www.malarianomore.org/what-we-do>). In fact, we never even see the money. The writers, the designers, the promoters and the Domino Project all worked for free for months to bring this book to you, so you could step up and save someone's life.

Will you do that?

The little voice says: But what if they don't? What if your readers become skeptical, I say to myself. What if they hesitate or don't come through? Then I relax and realize that this just isn't going to happen. You care too much. Thank you for that.

[One other thing you could do: spread the word. If you forward this note to just 25 people (and tweet it), it'll be worth more than you can imagine. Thank you.]



(<http://www.endmalariaday.com>)



Back in stock! (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/back-in-stock.html>)

August 30, 2011

The four-pack of the Zig Ziglar goal planner

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719215/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) is now back in stock.

I appreciate your patience. You can now go about transforming your life and work.



Quality, price, marginal cost and the open door

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/quality-price-marginal-cost-and-the-open-door.html>)

August 28, 2011

No one expects a Bugatti or Tesla to cost the same as a used Celica. After all, if you want a car that is silent, fast and sexy, you will (and should) pay more for it.

No one expects that dinner at Alinea should cost the same as dinner at McDonald's. After all, even though the calories are the same, the quality, attention to detail and costs are not.

But for books and movies, there's no correlation at all.

A lousy movie costs precisely the same to see in the theatre as Memento did. Even after we find out if the movie is better, the price doesn't change—a DVD of Toy Story is the same as the new release of the Smurfs.

Worse still, a used paperback copy of *Snow Crash* gives you precisely the same level of intellectual quality as the original hardcover did, at one-tenth the price.

Obviously, this is because the intellectual property rights, the ideas, those are of a quality worth pursuing, while the letters on the page or the pixels on the screen cost precisely the same to deliver as for something lousy.

And the open door? Since the cost of quality is all up front, a digital copy is just fine... better in fact, because it's convenient and easy to share. Can't do that with a Tesla.

The producer realizes that he has a product with a marginal cost of zero. Even a nickel or dime is better than nothing, and when those of lesser quality start to lower their prices to gain market share, there's pressure to keep up. (I remember when a VHS movie cost \$90).

The paradox here is that the stuff upfront, the risk and the guts and the hard work to make a great bit of content, is actually going up, while the price we're willing to pay for a digital copy is plummeting, and will continue to plummet. We don't hesitate to pay \$25 for a hardcover (yet) but there are almost no iPad apps that cost that much for similar content. Yet the original cost for the app is probably greater than it is for the book.

I think we'll always be willing to pay extra for the benefits we get from getting something first, getting it curated or getting it customized. But for most of what gets purchased in pop culture, none of those three are at work.

Prepare for a continuous erosion of what you pay for digital content, at the same time we'll see a sticky and upward trend for what you might be charged for the collectible stuff and the scarce or custom. I think producers are going to fight mightily for a second (higher) tier of pricing for

amazing work, but while this might work for the frontlist new stuff, I have a hard time seeing it sustained for the backlist titles.

How much do you expect to pay for a perfect (but used) digital copy of Prince's Greatest Hits? How about a penny (https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/B000002MNA/ref=sr_1_21_olp?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1314545570&sr=1-21&condition=used)?



Social media, webcasts, science, a free ebook and a world record... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/social-media-webcasts-science-a-free-ebook-and-a-world-record.html>)

August 23, 2011

Dan Zarrella, chief scientist at HubSpot, has written a new book and we're honored to publish it.

This week only, the Kindle edition (<https://www.amazon.com/Zarrellas-Hierarchy-Contagiousness-Engineering-ebook/dp/B005BP1Y36>) (also readable on the iPad, Mac, PC, etc.) is free in some of the many countries around the world. (UK (https://www.amazon.co.uk/Zarrellas-Hierarchy-Contagiousness-Engineering-ebook/dp/B005BP1Y36/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1314103271&sr=8-2))

Thanks to our sponsors, MailChimp (<https://mailchimp.com/>) and HubSpot (<https://www.hubspot.com/>). If you do online marketing of any kind, you really need to check out both companies. Tell them Dan sent you.

And, a special bonus, today, Tuesday, pub day, Dan is hosting a free webinar (<https://www.hubspot.com/science-of-social-media/>) about the book. You can get all the details and sign up for it right now. I guess this is a great example of a virus worth spreading... if you have colleagues who do anything related to online marketing, they'll probably appreciate an invite to the webinar. Tweet away. **#dominoZ**

How cool would it be to end up in the Guinness records book for this?

PS the hardcover

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/193671924X/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) is available too, now with extra bunnies.



The big pile of books (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/the-big-pile-of-books.html>)

August 15, 2011

Cleaning out a moldy corner of my basement, I ended up with a stack of about 400 paperback books.

Looking at each cover, I remember what was inside. Each contained a notion or an adventure or an idea. It adds up. (With some, I even remember where I was when I read them).

The magic of books, something I haven't found in blog posts, jewel boxes, tweets or old *TV Guides*, is that they perfectly encapsulate an idea. They have a beginning, a middle and an end. And they have a cover, something that wraps it all together.

Maybe I'm a fogie, but I have trouble visualizing a pile (or a wallful) of Kindle ebooks. I'm going to miss that.



Stop wasting time and make your meetings matter.

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/stop-wasting-time-and-make-your-meetings-matter.html>)

August 7, 2011

Since its publication last week, *Read This Before Our Next Meeting* (https://www.amazon.com/Read-This-Before-Meeting-ebook/dp/B0057ZER34/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1312764969&sr=8-1) rose to the #1 most popular book on the Kindle in the world. It's been downloaded by thousands of people (thanks to our sponsor, Citrix (http://www.citrix.com/English/ps2/products/product.asp?contentID=13976&ntref=prod_top)) and is sure to help hundreds of organizations change what they do all day. New York Times bestselling author of *Love is the Killer App: How to Win Business and Influence Friends*, Tim Sanders, says "If you live meeting-to-meeting, this book will save your business life."

You're not the only ones who think the meeting problem is *huge* time-suck.

Al Pittampalli, author of the book, is helping companies and individuals take back their days by having productive, decision-supporting (as opposed to decision-avoiding) meetings. If you've found yourself looking at the clock during a meeting recently, wishing for a memo instead of a 45-minute conference call, or wondering how to get real work done in your company, see what Al and his team of meeting culture warriors are up to below. Join to become *your* organization's meeting culture warrior and tell us if your company's meeting culture should be on the "best" or "worst" list.

Learn the Principles

Join Al for a live two-part webinar (<http://video.webcasts.com/events/pmny001/viewer/index.jsp?eventid=39367&adid=domino>) series on how to solve your company's meeting problem. Hosted by Citrix, the webinar will teach you to conduct meetings that support decision-making and action, introduce change in your company, and how to instill (not kill) the sense of urgency in your organization.

Tell Us Your Story

Tell us about the meetings you've experienced, and your company may be chosen for a meeting culture overhaul: Free books, posters (<http://ideaschema.com/go/modern-meeting-poster/>) and a live webinar with Al Pittampalli to help your managers and meeting leaders transition smoothly to the Modern Meeting Standard. Submit yours here (<http://modernmeetingstandard.com/save-your-meeting-culture/>).

Are you holding Modern Meetings? Tell the world so by adding your name to our list. Watch the Modern Meeting movement as it grows! View the list by clicking here. (<http://modernmeetingstandard.com/tell-the-world/>)

Become a Meeting Culture Warrior

Be the official office hero and show your seriousness about changing your company's meeting culture with Moo's specially designed *Read This Before Our Next Meeting* Business Cards (<http://us.moo.com/design-templates/business-cards/pack/meetings-more.html>). The cards, designed with the seven principles from the book are customizable with your/your company's name and will take your meeting culture from "eh" to "extraordinary." (Screenshot above.)



Using the code **MOODOMINO**, get 10% off one pack of either 50 OR 200 business cards (classic, green or rounded corners). The offer expires at 11:59pm (PST) on Aug 31st. Discount does not apply to rush printing or logo design and does not include shipping. Valid for one use per customer only.



Are you feeling lucky? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/are-you-feeling-lucky.html>)

August 5, 2011

One of the biggest distinctions between old publishing and new is the nature of luck.

The fact is, in the old model, *something* had to become a bestseller. *What to Expect When You're Expecting* just hit its tenth year on the bestseller lists (520 weeks in a row, 17 million copies sold). It's a great book from a great publisher, but a run like that is as much the work of good timing, good breaks and the fickle finger of fate. There's a reason the expression, "surprise bestseller" is in the vernacular. Most bestsellers are in fact, surprises.

Do the math: 170,000 real books published a year, probably 50,000 of them are commercial, well constructed and seriously published. Of those 50,000, as many as 100 (that's 2 a week) hit their potential. One out of five hundred. It's got to be *some* book, but it doesn't have to be yours.

Since there doesn't appear to be a significant correlation between publishing prowess and success (even great editors, great marketers and great sales teams at publishers don't regularly succeed), at some point it comes down to a spin of the wheel. And the author gets to take that spin at someone else's expense. Yes, she has to write a great book and yes she has to tour or whatever the publisher asks, but it's the publisher that's putting cash and risk on the line. Why do some books from unknown authors sell great while others don't? No one knows.

Compare this to the lonely life of the self-published author. This is streetfighting, one reader at a time. Getting a word file turned into an ebook is trivially easy. Getting a book into the world isn't so hard. Being discovered and talked about: really hard.

Building a tribe (https://www.amazon.com/Tribes-We-Need-You-Lead/dp/1591842336/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1312463478&sr=8-1) is not a matter of a miracle, instead, it's about converting tiny groups of people at a time, leading them, connecting them, building an audience. When a self-published author does this, she has a new job. Not the author part, the publisher part. She's not putting a book into the universe and hoping it will be found. She's not even putting a book in a journalist's hands and hoping it will be hyped. No, she is engaging in a years-long journey to build a platform. It might take a decade to become an overnight success, but if you keep it up, if you keep building, the odds keep getting better and better.

That's why it's silly to compare the two ways of making a book happen. If you can get a great deal from a publisher and you're into the spin, go spin! If you want to control the building of the platform, get your hands dirty and avoid the whims of fate, then the other path makes a lot more sense, no?

[analogy alert: the above applies to your career, to musicians, to entrepreneurs, to VCs, coaches and just about everyone who is hoping to get picked.]



Meetings are death, death to meetings (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/08/meetings-are-death-death-to-meetings.html>)

August 3, 2011

[For a limited time, the Kindle (https://www.amazon.com/Read-This-Before-Meeting-ebook/dp/B0057ZER34/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1311778114&sr=8-1) edition is free...]

I got a note from my friend Michael last week. He was explaining his new job. Apparently, in a typical ten hour day, he has nine hours and fifteen minutes of meetings on his schedule.

Forty-five minutes to do work.

If meetings aren't work, what are they? They are soul-suckers. They extinguish original thought. They turn a job into a marathon, a career into nothing but chair-warming.

It used to be that most people worked for a living, and a few dispensable 'suits' spent their time in meetings. Good riddance, it kept them out of our hair.

Now, of course, the meetings have spread like a pox, and even those that used to produce are sucked into their vortex.

Al Pittampalli wants to change that. He demands we change that. And he is here to help you do just that.

Thanks to the kind folks at Citrix (the home of GoToMeeting (<https://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/>)), you can get a Kindle (https://www.amazon.com/Read-This-Before-Meeting-ebook/dp/B0057ZER34/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1311778114&sr=8-1) edition of READ THIS BEFORE OUR NEXT MEETING (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719169/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) for **free**, for seven days, starting today. The Kindle edition runs on Kindles, of course, but also on the Kindle reader app (https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=kcp_ipad_mkt_lnd?docId=1000493771) you can run on your iPad, Mac, PC, etc. [UK (https://www.amazon.co.uk/Read-This-Before-Meeting-ebook/dp/B0057ZER34/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1312369421&sr=8-4) pricing is now fixed... thanks for your patience.]

For more details, check out Al's blog. (<http://modernmeetingstandard.com/>) And please tell your friends.

Here's the deal: You should go get the free (https://www.amazon.com/Read-This-Before-Meeting-ebook/dp/B0057ZER34/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1311778114&sr=8-1) edition, of course. But that won't be sufficient, because your co-workers won't have read it. For them, you must either get them a hardcover of their own (perhaps the 52 pack (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719185/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>) for your office) or just stand over their desk and watch them download the Kindle edition. It's not about buying it or even reading it. It's about *doing* it.

Do me a favor... try this for just three days. For just three days, give Al's approach to the Modern Meeting Standard a try. Then (and only then) post a review on Amazon and tell the world if it worked.

Don't thank me. Thank Al. He's the patron saint of productivity, the man who saved business from itself.

Sorry

This video does not exist.

REVIEWS!

“I dutifully avoid meetings whenever possible, which is pretty much always. If I was to go to meetings, though, I’d want Al to run them. And if that wasn’t possible, I’d send this book to everyone else ahead of time and wait for them to cancel the meeting or run it exactly how this book describes.” –Chris Guillebeau, *The Art of Non-Conformity*

“Sucked dry, worn down, numbed out: pick your metaphor. Anyway you cut it, bad meetings are killing you and your organization. This book will be your shield and sword to get your life back. Now, we just need to sort out email.” –Michael Bungay Stanier, *Do More Great Work*

“There’s a big difference between talking about doing something and actually doing it. If you’ve ever been in a meeting whose sole purpose was to plan for another meeting, you NEED this book.” –Josh Kaufman, *The Personal MBA*

“The typical corporate meeting makes you feel like you’re busy doing something. But as Al Pittampalli explains, meetings are a mess – an unproductive waste of time to validate the status quo. In his fascinating manifesto, Al presents a better way – the Modern Meeting – to actually move your business forward. If you want to create a culture of decisive action, get out of your nice comfortable meeting room and read this book now.” –David Meerman Scott, *Real-Time Marketing & PR*

“The majority of us have the same experience: at some point during the day, we lift our heads out of the haze of phone calls, emails and meetings and say, ‘I need to go home so I can get some work done!’ You can’t get more counter-productive than that. The main reason is that meetings not only suck, but that meetings suck the life out of organizations. It doesn’t have to be that way and it

shouldn't. Finally, there's a shining light for all of us in Al Pittampalli's Read This Before Our Next Meeting. Unfortunately, the book was named poorly. It should be called, Read This Now! Please!" – Mitch Joel, President of Twist Image and author, *Six Pixels of Separation*



Publishing Zig Ziglar (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/publishingzig.html>)

July 27, 2011

Zig Ziglar has changed the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

He changed mine.

It's an honor and a privilege to publish a new version of Zig's extraordinary Performance Planner (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719215/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>). Updated for a new generation, this workbook will change your life. But only if you use it.

Buy a copy today, get it tomorrow and start writing in it. Six weeks from now, your world will be different.

That's an audacious claim from an author who doesn't usually go in for audacious claims, but I've never met a single person who was able to find the guts to use this process and then failed to benefit from it.

The workbook comes in a four pack. Each volume is good for three months, so you either get a year's supply of goal setting for yourself or three extra workbooks you can share with your team. I think you'll discover that if four colleagues start using the magic of goal setting at the same time, things change even faster than you might expect.

(It's not in ebook form, sorry, but you can't write in an ebook... not effectively, anyway).

The book costs \$7.50 a copy (but you need to buy four at a time). It's hard for me to imagine a better use of your time and money if your goal is to achieve your goals.



Strangers and friends: understanding publishing

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/strangers-and-friends-understanding-publishing.html>)

July 22, 2011

The bookstore and the publisher keep more than 85% of what a reader pays for a book.

And that money is well-earned. Why? Because book publishing is the act of taking a financial risk to bring an idea to an unknown reader.

The key word is unknown. Before the book is purchased, neither the bookstore nor the publisher knows the identity of the reader.

This is fundamentally different than a magazine or a newspaper (they have subscribers).

Reaching strangers is risky business. Penguin is left with \$40,000,000 in debt from Borders as they go bankrupt. They had to advance them that money because otherwise no bookstore would be able to take the risk of having all those books standing by, just hoping the right stranger would find the right book on the right day.

Authors, then, have a choice. They can give up more and more freedom and cash to publishers in exchange for the publishers taking the risk of finding, alerting and selling to strangers, or they can start to organize a tribe, to build permission, to engage with readers before the book exists and to sell those friends on their work.

Selling to friends (people who know you, trust you, are aware of what you can offer) is orders of magnitude more efficient than seeking out strangers. Sure, it's time consuming and frightening to earn those friendships, but they are the transformative element of the new publishing.

Once you have a base of friends, then, publishing is reduced to a much simpler set of tasks—the hard work of editing, designing, printing and fulfilling. Hard, but not financially difficult. Not just that, but the speed, freedom and control will transform the way you write as well as how you engage with your audience.

It's very seductive for an author to believe that a fairy godmother will introduce her fabulous idea to legions of strangers. Seductive, yes, but rarely something that actually happens.

[There are dozens of businesses, that like book publishing, focus on strangers. What happens to your business when you switch gears and focus on your friends instead?]



If you publish yourself, does it become more fun than writing?

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/if-you-publish-yourself-does-it-become-more-fun-than-writing.html>)

July 17, 2011

Via Bob Lefsetz, a brilliant bunch of riffs from John Mayer (<http://www.berklee-blogs.com/2011/07/john-mayer-2011-clinic-manage-the-temptation-to-publish-yourself/>), who almost let social media ruin his music.

I think about this in two ways:

- a. if you're going to make a business of your art, you need to be responsible for the monetization—you can't wait to get picked.
- b. on the other hand, if the lizard brain is happier having you tweet instead of write, you've got a serious creation problem, one that you need to address before you're going to be able to make more great work.

No obvious answer on how to balance them, but the question is right there, ready for you to tackle.



Bookstrapping (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/bookstrapping.html>)

July 12, 2011

Traditional publishing: “Be famous, build a platform, organize a tribe, then we'll publish your non-fiction book.”

Self publishing, particularly long-tail digital self-publishing: “Write a book, codify a manifesto, put it into the world and use it attract, organize and build a platform.”

When the cost of showing up goes down (so the real cost is intellectual, not cash) it's easier than ever to use a book to make an impact.

Thanks to Kevin (http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/07/bookstrapping_s.php) for the spoonerism.



The evolution of pop culture (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/the-evolution-of-culture.html>)

July 7, 2011

Here's the question: *does pop culture change top down, or do people always get what they want/deserve?*

Do car companies push a style upon the market, or does the market choose a style?

Can an influencer (like Ellen or the NYT) make a book a mass sensation, or do they merely make a bunch of noise—the market reads and recommends and embraces what it wants ...

The question matters because we hand over plenty of money and respect to those that say that they can push something onto the culture. The question matters because when it comes to taking responsibility, those very same people often claim that all they can do is make a small ruckus—it's the market that gets what it deserves.

Is banal TV banal because viewers demand it or because it's cheap to make and easy to sell?

Are powerful cars powerful because car guys like to make guzzlers, or does the market insist on them?

Do some newspapers misbehave and cross ethical lines because it's the only way to survive in a world where consumers are hungry for a no-holds-barred race to the bottom or ... you get the idea.

Here's my thought: both sides are right. Marketers get too much credit but also take too little responsibility.

A portion of the population is very responsive to the latest buzz, the latest big push. Part of the media (the part that wants to reach that market) is most likely to write about whatever is being hyped right now, and a fraction of the population is a sucker for what this part of the media is writing about.

But, and it's a big but, much of the population isn't even aware of this nonsense. They're oblivious to the hype machine and the cycle of endless promo.

They are more likely to consume media because "everyone else" is already doing it. They're following a trial or reading a book or watching a movie because it's mainstream, safe, approved, the it-moment, etc.

They are more likely to demand a big "American-style" car because they've been trained to fit in and to buy what the neighbors think they should buy.

It's impossible to hype your product to this spot in the middle of the market. You can get it started, sure, but only some (a handful) of the things that are adopted by the early adopters actually move through the curve and reach the middle.

We love big cars because car guys loved them and loved making them, and early adopter car guys liked to buy them, which set a century-long standard that the rest of the consumers in the market try to emulate.

Every once in a while, in the exception that proves the rule, an idea or product skips the early adopters and seems to magically entrance a different slice (witness the organic and largely hype-free start of Harry Potter). Or consider the very untraditional launch and growth of the Prius... More often than not, though, the hype machine spends itself out (<http://www.theawl.com/2011/06/the-jon-jon-goulian-bubble-bomb>) and fails.

Authors worry too much about the hype part. We focus too much on the promo, on the article in the *Times* or the review in the *New Yorker*. I don't think publishers are particularly good at helping authors reach those that aren't looking for them, even if the book is really good. (<http://www.startuplessonslearned.com/2011/07/lean-startup-book-is-here.html>)

The amount of luck in the voyage from launch to mass is huge. But it's certainly true that a product or service the delights the early adopters—delights them enough to turn them into peer-focused salespeople—is the tried and true path to mass success.

Short version: make great stuff, stuff that's easy or urgent to talk about and that matches a wide but vital worldview. Then share it with people who have given you permission to talk about it.



Allergic to books (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/07/allergic-to-books.html>)

July 2, 2011

Here's a comment from a thread after a particularly positive post about Derek (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719118/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>)'s new book,

“These are excellent quotes. I'm definitely buying Derek's book hopefully sometime in the near future.”

Hey, it's \$9. It takes less time to read than a few blogs. No, the issue isn't the time and the issue isn't the money. The issue is that many products and services are things that some people don't want to buy. Or at least buy now.

Some folks won't go to a therapist, out of principle. Some don't want to buy life insurance, even if it's only a dollar. Some refuse to consider walking around the block, even if it's faster than driving.

The lesson for me: shun the non-believers. Your product isn't for everyone, that's fine. No need to persuade them. Focus on those that are interested instead. In the case of books, that's about 5% of the population that buys books regularly. The rest? Nope.



“I Miss the Mob” (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/i-miss-the-mob.html>)

June 30, 2011

“Are you happy? Are you profitable? Isn't that enough?”

For the launch of *Anything You Want*

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719118/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>), Derek is creating ten animated videos to accompany the chapters in the book. They'll be released here (<https://sivers.org/a>) over the next two weeks.

Here's one of our favorites, “I Miss the Mob,” which captures Derek's perspective on happiness, profitability and enough.

Sorry

This video does not exist.

I miss the mob (<https://vimeo.com/25492897>) from Derek Sivers (<https://vimeo.com/sivers>) on Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com>).



Now look what you've done (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/now-look-what-youve-done.html>)

June 30, 2011

Shopify, as part of the hoopla and support you've helped create around *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719002/permissionmarket/ref=nosim/>), has just announced a donation of \$100,000.00 (<http://thenextweb.com/ca/2011/06/28/shopify-celebrates-5th-birthday-with-large-donation-to-acumen-fund/>) to the Acumen Fund (<http://www.acumenfund.org>).

Traditional media is all about interrupting strangers. Modern media (including modern bookselling) is focused on building a tribe, earning permission and then creating products and services for that audience.

Instead of readers for your books, you look for books for your readers. I think that applies to countless endeavors.

Thanks to you for making our books bestsellers, and for creating opportunities for good works. And thanks to Shopify (https://www.shopify.com/?utm_source=dominoproject&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=testimonial) for stepping up.

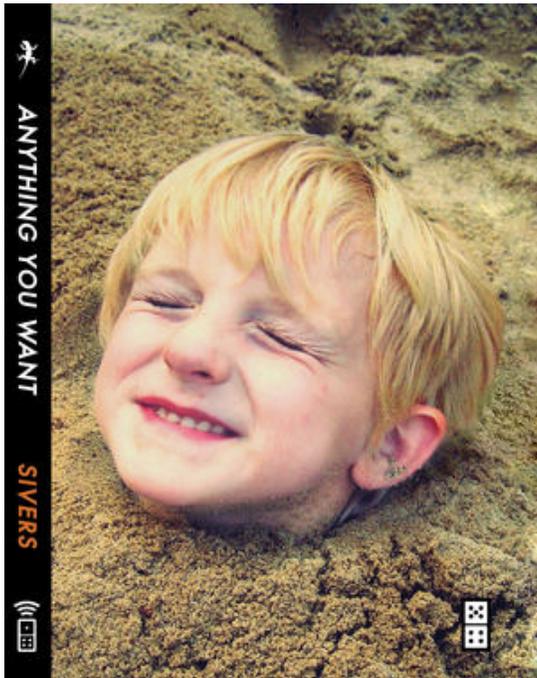


'Anything You Want' – Not Your Typical Business Book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/derek-sivers-anything-you-want.html>)

June 29, 2011

This is your one chance at life, you can have anything you want, what is worth doing?

Today we're thrilled to announce the launch of Derek Sivers' book, *Anything You Want* (<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719118/permissionmarket>). It's an autobiographical tale of starting a little hobby, accidentally growing it into a big business, and then selling it for \$22 million.



(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719118/permissionmarket>) *Anything You Want* is not your typical business book. It's about living your passion, knowing why you do what you do, and doing what matters. It's about knowing your personal philosophy of what makes you happy and pursuing that in everything you do.

This book gets at the heart of what Derek learned in ten years of starting and growing CD Baby, compacted into something you can read in an hour—but with a passion that will stick with you forever.

Whether you're an entrepreneur, aspiring to be one, or you care at all about what it means to be human, this

book is for you.

Anything You Want is available in hardcover

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719118/permissionmarket>), 5 pack

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719126/permissionmarket>), 52 pack

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719134/permissionmarket>), kindle

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00506NRBS/permissionmarket>), audio

(<https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1936719142/permissionmarket>), and a very limited edition Collectible (<https://www.amazon.com/Anything-You-Want-Limited-Deluxe/dp/1936719142/permissionmarketing>), signed by Derek.

When you buy the book in any format, you get a free bonus (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//authors-gift-more-than-200-songs-when-you-purchase-anything-you-want>) of over 200 MP3s by some of Derek's favorite musicians.



Your face on our cover? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/your-face-on-our-cover.html>)

June 25, 2011

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com//wp-content/uploads/2011/06/startrekreduced.jpg>) Twice before, I've invited readers to nominate themselves or a friend to be on the inside jacket of one of my books (you can still see the mosaics that were created inside the hardcovers of *Tribes* (<https://www.amazon.com/Tribes-We-Need-You-Lead/dp/1591842336>) and *Linchpin* (https://www.amazon.com/Linchpin-Are-Indispensable-Seth-Godin/dp/1591843162/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0?ie=UTF8&qid=1309046540&sr=1-1)).



This time, we're brainstorming about using a picture on the outside, on the front cover of an upcoming book...

If you or someone you know might be interested, read on:

- We'll need you to email us an excellent quality, in focus, not-tiny photo that you have taken or own the rights to.
- It should be a picture of someone doing something they love, something quirky, perhaps, but certainly personal. It might be showing off a tattoo or attending a science fiction convention or just clearly being oneself. A boring headshot isn't going to help. Here's a picture I found online that sort of captures the essence of this. The better the picture, the cleaner the background, the more interesting—the better the chances...
- Please note that we can't guarantee (or even hint) that we'll use your picture.
- When you send the picture, it will go to an automated account that collects the pictures for us, so please don't include a note, as we can't read them. Do, however, include your name and contact info in the email you send. If you have trouble attaching a photo to an email, ask a friend. Here's the email you'll need: case46again@photos.flickr.com (<mailto:case46again@photos.flickr.com>)

Thanks for pitching in and for spreading the word.



A spreadsheet for the self-published (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/a-spreadsheet-for-the-self-published.html>)

June 21, 2011

Jenny Blake, an author and Googler, came by to share the secrets of her publishing success. After her talk, she graciously agreed to share her spreadsheet with our beloved Domino Project readers.

You can find it here in Google docs (<https://bit.ly/BookMarketingSpreadsheet>) format and here in Excel (<https://bit.ly/BookMarketingExcel>) (as a download).

Here's her description:

Thousands of books are published every year, and yet many authors feel like they have to figure out the road to promotion alone. Authors (together with their publicists and agents) work tirelessly to reinvent the promotion wheel every single time. There is no one size fits all approach, but there can be a more streamlined way to get organized.

I knew I needed a way to track the hundreds of book promotion action items and ideas floating around in my head — everything from website development to book tour planning to advance copy recipient lists. I created this spreadsheet as a way of organizing the hundreds of things an author thinks about on the road to book launch, in hopes of making others' lives easier in what can be an overwhelming and stressful process.

Thanks Jenny. (PS, here's Jenny's book (https://www.amazon.com/Life-After-College-Complete-Getting/dp/0762441275/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1308680046&sr=8-1). She's not self-published, she merely acts like she is, which is critical).



1500:1 (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/15001.html>)

June 17, 2011

A publisher can produce 1500 different books, great books, important books, groundbreaking books that could change the world for what it cost to make the Green Lantern movie. The publisher could pay each author a \$75,000 advance and produce the titles (enough to fill several bookshelves in

thousands of homes) for the cost of one summertime clunker.

Some are saying that the future of books is in the direction of apps, videos and other multimedia productions, entire experiences that express an idea.

The problem: none of these can be created by a single individual.

The magic of a book is that it is largely the work of one person. Yes, she'll need some help from editors and distributors, etc., but they sometimes come and go, while the author remains.

It's entirely possible that a new art form (one that's smaller than a movie and involves text) may come along, but I'm betting we'll see more of a flourishing on the ebook side, a place where the individual voice remains the key building block.



Books are dead (long live books) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/books-are-dead-long-live-books.html>)

June 14, 2011

Here's an insightful, stick-with-you essay (http://craigmod.com/journal/post_artifact/) about what happens to books in a digital world.

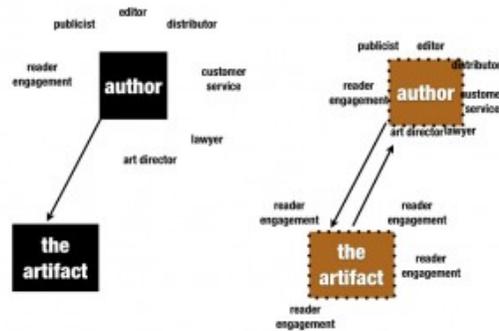
For me, there are two key insights:

There are three stages—pre-artifact (there is no book yet), artifact (here it is) and post-artifact (what happens now? not much). Craig argues that all three stages are changing, and quite dramatically.

The second insight isn't as delineated, but it comes down to this: what it means to be an author is changing for the first time in a hundred years. This is a profound shift in one of the most leveraged professions of all. Instead of there being a clear box around who an author is and what an author does, that box is becoming blurred.

In the rough illustration below, I show the before and after of this blurring. In the first case, the yesterday case, the author has a job. She writes a book.

In the second case, the tomorrow case, the author is the ringleader, cheerleader, ringmaster, organizer and jack of all trades of a process that might not ever end.



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/beforeafterpublishing.jpg>)

click to enlarge



On the radio, in the store (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/on-the-radio-in-the-store.html>)

June 10, 2011

Here's the unedited version (<http://www.cbc.ca/spark/2011/05/full-interview-seth-godin-on-the-domino-project-and-the-future-of-book-publishing/>) of a radio interview I did about Domino, permission marketing and a new era of book publishing. Airs this weekend on the CBC for our Canadian readers...



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/4covers.jpg>)

One fact to share: I just got the reports for the sales of our first three titles

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/books>). Since March, we have shipped more than 250,000 copies of the three books in all platforms (a typical business book sells 5,000 copies). All three hit the top 10

on Amazon. Thanks to each of you for your support and for the way you've enthusiastically spread the word.

We'll be announcing our next title in a few weeks.



Dr. Seuss never took an advance (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/06/dr-seuss-never-took-an-advance.html>)

June 7, 2011

For the last fifty years, the driving economic force of the book business has been the advance against royalties.

Virtually all books aimed a mass audience earn precisely the same royalty per book. Stephen King, the unknown first time author and I get paid exactly the same royalty per book by Penguin.

What changes is the advance. This is a non-refundable earnest payment the publisher puts up to entice the author (and her agent) to sign on, to choose them. When everything else is equal (and it often is), the advance is the thing that gets looked for and reported (<https://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/16/nyregion/hillary-clinton-book-advance-8-million-is-near-record.html>) on.

As you can imagine, this affects the rest of the process. The royalties earn out against the advance and in fact are rarely paid at all (if the advance is bigger than the royalties, the author gets no new money). Most publishers don't associate an advance paid four years ago with a royalty statement that comes in today. (And if they do pay attention, they're likely to make a non-economic decision— "let's promote this book even though it's not selling, because we have a big advance at stake.")

If there are two publishers, one with a great marketing and publishing program, and the other with an advance that's three times as big, guess who wins the author? A publisher with a big checkbook is able to land famous authors, which excites the salesforce, which gets more shelf space in the store which, perhaps, leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Of course, for the last half century, in a static publishing environment, all of this was very good news for authors. Not only did it remove risk for a profession that could ill afford to take risk, but big advances focused the attention of the publisher. You were getting paid a lot and it bought you a better publishing experience at the same time...

(Dr. Seuss rejected this and refused to take an advance from his publisher. He wanted his publisher to have the same incentives he did.)

The advance makes it very clear who's in charge. The publisher pays, so the publisher calls the shots. The author has a scarce asset, and sells it to the publisher, who exploits it. The friction comes when the author/tribe leader/impresario believes that risks and new technologies can help get her work into the world, and the publisher demurs.

As the underpinnings of traditional publishing start to shift, the pressure to change the culture of the advance are sure to mount. Of course, as long as there are two publishers willing to spend freely, advances will stick around.

Having been paid advances for years, I'm not arguing they should be abolished even if they could be. For those curious about the future of the book business, though, it's impossible to talk about [digital, the long tail, free editions, sub rights] without acknowledging that they drive the decisions in the heart of the industry.



Trust Yourself (#Trust30) Writing Challenge **(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/emerson-pledge.html>)**

May 31, 2011

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Today, we're kicking off #Trust30 (<http://RalphWaldoEmerson.me>), an online initiative and 30-day writing challenge that encourages you to look within and trust yourself. It's an opportunity to reflect on your now and create direction for your future.

Sign-up (<http://ralphwaldoemerson.me#commit>) to receive daily prompts from inspiring thought-leaders (<http://ralphwaldoemerson.me/authors>) who will help guide you on your writing journey.

ps – If you like this pledge, check out [reverb10](http://reverb10.com) (<http://reverb10.com>), it's inspiring.



Why is there elephant poop on my book? SOLD OUT! **(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/why-is-there-elephant-poop-on-my-book.html>)**

May 27, 2011

Ralph Waldo Emerson loves handmade, innovative, earth-friendly products that create a social impact. He loves them so much he insisted we collaborate with Holstee to create something remarkable for the limited edition of *Self-Reliance* (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-Limited-Deluxe-Ralph-Emerson/dp/1936719096>).

So we did just that. The collectible edition of *Self-Reliance* comes with a custom book jacket and five inspiring greeting cards made of 50% recycled paper and 50% elephant poop. They're also 100% Emerson approved.

To see what they look like, ~~or to grab one of the only 100 that exist~~ (we just sold out this morning, thanks everyone!), head to Amazon now (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-Limited-Deluxe-Ralph-Emerson/dp/1936719096>).

Ok. Welcome back.

We knew we needed to make this edition of *Self-Reliance* sing, so we turned to Holstee (<http://shop.holstee.com>), a Brooklyn-based design company that creates and curates sustainably-made products that support entrepreneurs in developing nations.

Inspired by the Holstee Manifesto greeting cards (<http://shop.holstee.com/products/holstee-greeting-card>), and using some of my favorite quotes from *Self-Reliance*, I designed a short, inspiring typographic manifesto to honor Emerson. The team at Holstee (Mike, Dave, and Fabian) worked their magic and, as Ralph said, "The books and cards are gorgeous. Thank you Holstee!"

We can't wait to hear what you have to say about this Holstee and Domino collaboration. Let us know what you think at @projectdomino (<https://twitter.com/#!/projectdomino>) and @holstee (<https://twitter.com/#!/HOLSTEE>).



Would Ralph Waldo Emerson wear wool? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/self-reliance.html>)

May 25, 2011

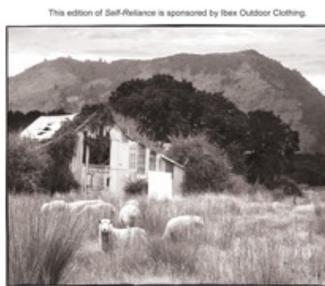
Today, The Domino Project launches a contemporary re-imagining of Ralph Waldo Emerson's most famous essay *Self-Reliance* (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-ebook/dp/B004X80U1E>). We're thrilled to work with Ibex (<http://www.ibexwear.com/dominoproject>), a very cool outdoorwear

company, to reintroduce you Ralph Waldo Emerson. In return, Emerson's *Self-Reliance* is helping introduce Ibex to the world.

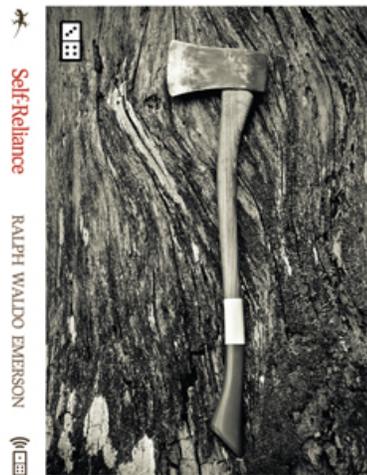
Ibex is fast becoming an industry leader in the world of outdoor clothing. They're famous for the distribution of 'ethical wool' where they adhere to strict Zque (<http://www.discoverzque.com/modules/what-is-zque/index.php>) regulations. They care as much about performance and comfort as they do about the well-being of the animals themselves (plus the stuff they sell is beautiful).

They have a tribe. It's resilient and full of heart.

But how to spread the word so that more people know about about this outstanding company?



The Art of Wool



(<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-ebook/dp/B004X80U1E>)

[UPDATE: The contest is now over... see winners at the end of this post]

Ibex is sponsoring a free Kindle edition (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-ebook/dp/B004X80U1E>) of Ralph Waldo Emerson's classic, which means that for today and tomorrow only, you can get a *Kindle copy on Amazon free of charge*. Get your free copy here (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-ebook/dp/B004X80U1E>). (And by the way, there is a beautiful hardcover edition (https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-Ralph-Waldo-Emerson/dp/1936719061/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1306338503&sr=1-1) available as well).

The great news is that even if you don't have a kindle, you can still enjoy your complimentary copy by downloading the Kindle app (https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=kcp_ipad_mkt_lnd?docId=1000493771) and reading it on your Mac, PC, (alas, not Linux), Android, iPad, etc.

But that's not all. Ibex is also working with us to give away \$15,000 worth of gift cards to readers like you who tweet about *Self-Reliance*. Go here (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//ibex-tweet-sweepstakes>) to see how you can participate and score some free outdoor gear...

We're extremely pleased with the outcome of *Self-Reliance* and of having the opportunity to work with the great people at Ibex.

Enjoy your free copy and if you think it's something your friends might like, feel free to share the good news.



Video Interview with Steven Pressfield (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/video-interview-with-steven-pressfield.html>)

May 20, 2011

Yesterday, we held a 30-minute private chat between our street team and *Do the Work* (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/permissionmarket>) author Steven Pressfield. The interview contained so much great insight and knowledge that we decided to share it with you all now. Enjoy.



Hashtags for books (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/hashtags-for-books.html>)

May 19, 2011

This is a great idea. (<http://daretocomment.com/breathing-new-life-into-books-with-official-hashtags/>)

The notion of a persistent side conversation going on—one that you can participate in as you read a book—is compelling. We're in.

Starting soon, all our books will feature a hashtag in them, making it easy to coordinate the conversation among readers. For now:

Poke The Box (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002>) -> #ptbDomino

Do the Work (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1936719010>) -> #dtwDomino

Self Reliance (<https://www.amazon.com/Self-Reliance-Ralph-Waldo-Emerson/dp/1936719061>) -> #ReliantDomino

UPDATE: Check out what Aidan built— bookhashtags (<http://bookhashtags.com/>)



Free and useful and smart (for the Kindle) (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/free-and-useful-and-smart-for-the-kindle.html>)

May 13, 2011

In yet another great example of how the device changes how we read, Dave Pell has announced a curated free service (<http://delivereads.com/>) that delivers a few articles to your Kindle now and then. A very neat way to get updates that are longer than a tweet.

Check it out.



Free eBook – No Idling: 30 stories inspired by Do the Work (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/no-idling.html>)

May 12, 2011

In honor of Steven Pressfield's *Do the Work*, the Domino Project Street Team brought together their collective talents to create a free eBook entitled *No Idling: 30 inspiring stories from those who do the work* (https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/No_Idling_DTW_Workbook.pdf).

It's available from the link above, and it's free. Please use it, print it, and share it freely but please don't change or re-sell it.

The eBook features Andrew Warner (<http://mixergy.com/>), Neil Patel (<http://www.quicksprout.com/>), Charlie Gilkey (<http://productiveflourishing.com/>), James Altucher (<http://www.jamesaltucher.com/>), Neil Pasricha (<http://1000awesomethings.com/book/>), Mark Silver (<http://www.heartofbusiness.com/blog/>), David Siteman Garland (<http://www.therisetothetop.com/>), Carol Roth (<http://www.carolroth.com/>), Michael Port (<http://www.bookyourselfsolid.com/optin/>), Marshall Ulrich (<http://marshallulrich.com/blog/domino-project/>) and 20 others.

A huge thanks to street team members Mohit Pawar (<http://mohitpawar.com/>), Mollie Marti (<http://www.bestlifedesign.com/>), Sachit Gupta (<http://www.sachitgupta.me/>), Jeff Slobotski (<http://www.siliconprairienews.com/>), Dave Weinberg (<http://cellphonesketchpad.com/>), Rex Williams (<http://grootship.com/>), Tyler Hurst (<http://tdhurst.com/>), Megan Elizabeth Morris (<http://ideaschema.org/>), Melissa Giovagnoli (<http://networlding.com/>), Martin Whitmore (<http://ideaschema.com/work-with-us/>) and Debbie Weil (<http://debbieweil.com/>) for their hard work and collective energy.



The paradox of the paid PDF ebook (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/the-paradox-of-the-paid-pdf-ebook.html>)

May 10, 2011

No one wants to pay for a PDF if they don't know who wrote it and what's in it. Without the filter and imprimatur of a publishing house, we assume the worst.

Once someone *knows* what's in it, they probably don't want to pay for it (why should they, they already know what it says).

If you have a huge audience already (as Jason & Co. did when they launched their PDF (<https://gettingreal.37signals.com/>) at 37Signals) then you will inevitably do just fine, as you only need a small fraction of your fans to step up and support you.

If you are marketing a get rich quick (or slow) product, you can possibly make enough promises to entice the reader, but this is a tiny slice of all the books in the world.

For the rest of the world, though, if you're trying to break into the market, the paid PDF is hard to share, hard to talk about and hard to monetize.

The secret is to write something brilliant, share it far and wide and free, and then wait until you have enough fans to monetize the *next* one you do.

More here in a post I wrote years ago.

(http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2005/07/advice_for_auth.html)



The audience for your book... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/05/the-audience-for-your-book.html>)

May 8, 2011

Are you publishing for your fans? If so, do you have enough to justify the effort? Do you have a way of reaching them? Is there a better vehicle than a book for reaching your goal?

Are you publishing so your fans will have something to recommend to their friends? Is it in a form that they'll happily recommend? What's the half-life of this cycle—will friends recommend to friends and to friends to infinity? If not, how big an audience do you imagine reaching?

Are you publishing for strangers? How will they discover you? Or are you playing the lottery, figuring *someone* has to come out of nowhere with a big bestseller, it might as well be you...

Or are you publishing to make a point, to wave your book in front of a particular audience like a red flag in front of a bull?

Are you publishing to win an award or become a critic's darling? Good luck with that.

Are you publishing for your clients, with the intent of mailing the book directly to them? This is both easy and effective, but it isn't publishing, it's mailing them a book.

Are you publishing this book to make a living? Good luck with that. (Less than 3% of newly published authors make enough in royalties and advances to be happy to live on).

What you write is directly related to who you are writing for, and deciding to publish has nothing at all to do with deciding to write. Publishing is a business decision, a financial risk and a marketing project. If your goal is to generate reach, to share your gifts and your point of view, you can skip all of those and just give your work away.

There are people who should publish, who I hope will publish and who will create books we can't wait to read. And there are important books still unwritten, books that should be created and shared. Too often, though, we seek to follow a path where there isn't a sensible business model, and all that happens is nothing. Go, write. But think twice (or three times or six) about publishing the traditional way.



An interview on the future of publishing (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/an-interview-on-the-future-of-publishing.html>)

April 30, 2011

Here's a 25 minute rant (<http://www.litopia.com/radio/seth-godin-the-new-face-of-publishing/>) on where books might be headed.



The Champions on Your Side (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/the-champions.html>)

April 27, 2011

Resistance (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/do-the-work.html>) is the enemy to great work, says author Steve Pressfield. But with enemies come allies. Consider, who and what will push you through the dips and help you do the work that matters.

Here's an excerpt from *Do the Work* (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1936719010/permissionmarket>) about the champions on your side:

1. *Stupidity*

2. *Stubbornness*

3. *Blind faith*

4. *Passion*

5. *Assistance (the opposite of Resistance)*

6. *Friends and family*

Stay Stupid

The three dumbest guys I can think of: Charles Lindbergh, Steve Jobs, Winston Churchill. Why? Because any smart person who understood how impossibly arduous were the tasks they had set themselves would have pulled the plug before he even began.

Ignorance and arrogance are the artist and entrepreneur's indispensable allies. She must be clueless enough to have no idea how difficult her enterprise is going to be—and cocky enough to believe she can pull it off anyway.

How do we achieve this state of mind? By staying stupid. By not allowing ourselves to think.

A child has no trouble believing the unbelievable, nor does the genius or the madman. It's only you and I, with our big brains and our tiny hearts, who doubt and overthink and hesitate.

Don't think. Act.

We can always revise and revisit once we've acted. But we can accomplish nothing until we act.

Be Stubborn

Once we commit to action, the worst thing we can do is to stop.

What will keep us from stopping? Plain old stubbornness.

I like the idea of stubbornness because it's less lofty than "tenacity" or "perseverance." We don't have to be heroes to be stubborn. We can just be pains in the butt.

When we're stubborn, there's no quit in us. We're mean. We're mulish. We're ornery.

We're in till the finish.

We will sink our junkyard-dog teeth into Resistance's ass and not let go, no matter how hard he kicks.

Blind Faith

Is there a spiritual element to creativity? Hell, yes.

Our mightiest ally (our indispensable ally) is belief in something we cannot see, hear, touch, taste, or feel.

Resistance wants to rattle that faith. Resistance wants to destroy it.

*There's an exercise that Patricia Ryan Madson describes in her wonderful book, *Improv Wisdom*. (Ms. Madson taught improvisational theater at Stanford to standing-room only classes for twenty years.) Here's the exercise:*

Imagine a box with a lid. Hold the box in your hand. Now open it.

What's inside?

It might be a frog, a silk scarf, a gold coin of Persia. But here's the trick: no matter how many times you open the box, there is always something in it.

Ask me my religion. That's it.

I believe with unshakeable faith that there will always be something in the box.

Passion

Picasso painted with passion, Mozart composed with it. A child plays with it all day long.

You may think that you've lost your passion, or that you can't identify it, or that you have so much of it, it threatens to overwhelm you. None of these is true.

Fear saps passion.

When we conquer our fears, we discover a boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible well of passion.

Assistance

We'll come back to this later. Suffice it to say for now that as Resistance is the shadow, its opposite—Assistance—is the sun.

Friends and Family

When art and inspiration and success and fame and money have come and gone, who still loves us—and whom do we love?

Only two things will remain with us across the river: our inhering genius and the hearts we love.

In other words, what we do and whom we do it for.

Get your copy now. *Do the Work* is available for free on Kindle (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/permissionmarket>) for another three weeks only (thanks to GE) and for purchase in hardcover (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719010/permissionmarket>), 5-pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Pack-Designed-Share/dp/1936719029/permissionmarket>), 48-pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-48-Pack-Designed/dp/1936719037/permissionmarket>) and audio (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1455820997/permissionmarket>).



Raising the Bar with Strategic Partnerships

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/raising-the-bar-strategic-partnerships.html>)

April 26, 2011

A few months ago, Shopify came to us with an interest in partnering for their 2nd Annual Build a Business Contest (<https://www.shopify.com/contest>) – an initiative that gives budding entrepreneurs the chance to create a successful online business. But this year they wanted to raise the stakes even higher.

As an online hub for people interested in learning how to run a business, Shopify knows it isn't enough to give contestants and customers a platform to create; they also need to motivate, inspire, and guide. What's more, they recognize that to be a prime contender in the e-commerce space, they need to be bigger than simply an e-commerce site; they need to provide their customers with the resources necessary to grow a successful business.

As a result, Shopify is giving each contestant a copy of our first publication *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002>) by Seth Godin as motivation and inspiration for the journey ahead.

Poke the Box is entirely about taking initiative, realizing that external permission to do great work is no longer necessary, and that the time to act is now – not later. What better way to kick off the start of your business?

We think that you'll find what Shopify is doing is brilliant, not only in their genuine mission to help entrepreneurs grow, but also in their drive to innovate, push the envelope, and find creative ways to engage their tribes in meaningful ways.

It's companies who think big that ultimately act big and change the world. Those are the companies we are proud to work with.

Shopify launches their 2nd Annual Build a Business Contest today. Building an online business may not be for everyone, but if you're interested in getting in on the action, stop by Shopify.com to find out more. Eyes to the sky and best of luck!



How do you really Do the Work? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/how-do-you-really-do-the-work.html>)

April 25, 2011

It's not everyday we get inside the head of a bestselling author of over eight books (one that spawned a hit film) to find out how he *does what he does*. Steven Pressfield has run in Hollywood, military, and elite publishing circles and now he's entered the world of Domino. Three days ago The Domino Project published Steve's latest, *Do the Work* (https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1936719010/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1303480909&sr=8-1), the anticipated sequel to his first non-fiction book, *War of Art*. It's already a bestseller.

I interviewed Steve about *Do the Work* and found out (once and for all) how to beat Resistance, why creating never gets easier, and yes, even how I can get to the gym and stay there. I hope you enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed talking.

Below is the transcript. To see it on Amazon, go here (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?docId=1000673581>).

Ishita: What is the distinction between *Do the Work* and *War of Art* (https://www.amazon.com/War-Art-Through-Creative-Battles/dp/0446691437/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1303480965&sr=1-1), the book where you first introduced Resistance? Does *Do the Work* take it a step further?

Steve: *Do the Work* is structured to take the reader from A to Z. If the reader has a project they want to start or complete, such as a new business they want to open or a book they want to write, *Do the Work* is designed to take them from starting to shipping to hitting all the predictable resistance points along the way. I know you're familiar with these moments, Ishita; The beginning, the middle, and all the moments in between just before you ship and then just after you ship. *Do the Work* guides you from the start of the project and takes you all the way through.

It's about getting off your behind and starting something. And Seth Godin writes about this, that once you start, you have to finish; you don't get off the hook half way through. I recently got an email from a guy who said, "Help. I'm stuck." He was in a class and he had to write a screenplay and he was a quarter of the way through. Normally I would cheer him on, but just for fun, I gave him a little program to do; I put on my instructor voice and said, "Do this, do that, do this, do that." It worked because right away he got over a couple speed bumps and took it all the way to the finish

line. He loved it! I'd always been too shy to do that before, but I tried the assertive tone of voice and it really worked—he responded really well to it. So I thought, let me try that tone of voice in *Do The Work*.

Ishita: What did you tell him to do?

Steve: One of the first things I told him to do was to banish the self-censor. I could tell he was frozen, worrying, “Is this going to be good? Is this going to be perfect?” So I told him, “Take the next five days and write for two hours everyday. I don’t care what else is in your life—banish it. When you write for those two hours, start on minute one and don’t think for one second all the way through until minute 120. Just write, don’t self censor. Don’t do anything.” That really seemed to get him moving and gave him permission to not be paralyzed with seeking perfection.

Ishita: You almost have to be ruthless with yourself when you’re confronting your censor. What do you think is the difference between our natural limitations and Resistance? How can we tell Resistance from our own stuff coming up?

Steve: First let me say one thing. My rule of thumb is: When in doubt, it’s Resistance. When you think it might be something else, it’s not, it’s Resistance. When I went through my 20s and early 30s, I had about a seven-year period where I wandered into the wilderness, I ran away from everything in my life, believing the voices in my head and not recognizing them as Resistance. I went through a long, long period of getting in my own way in a really bad way, hurting other people along the way. The worst stuff you can imagine. It was only after that, when I came to this rule of thumb that “When in doubt, it is Resistance.” The answer is that you have to overcome it.

Ishita: So that was a time when you weren’t “doing the work?”

Steve: Absolutely, I wasn’t doing it at all.

Ishita: I relate to that. I’ll give you an example unrelated to creative work, but where Resistance rears its ugly head in a big way. Sometimes I’ll lace up my gym shoes, make the ten minute walk to the gym, and turn right back around and go home. And all the while I’m thinking, “What am I doing?!” I then wonder if there’s something before taking the action that comes into play, something that comes just prior to taking action.

Steve: I can just picture you now, Ishita.

Ishita: I don’t know if I should have told you that but there we have it!

Steve: I understand that. It's almost like you have to say, "Put your ass where your heart wants to be" and just put your body there and do it. For me it seems like a head of steam has to build up inside before you're actually able to take that plunge. That the pain of not doing it is worse than the pain of walking home from the gym, for example.

Ishita: You get so sick of not doing it that you force yourself to ultimately do it. It seems like we fight so hard against Resistance, it's a never-ending battle. As soon as you're done overcoming one obstacle, here comes another.

Steve: Absolutely, I mean, it never gets any easier. And it almost gets to a spiritual level, where it's just part of the human condition. Simply put, there are dark forces in religions and views of the world that stop us from ascending to higher levels and stops the higher level from communicating with us. The ancient rabbis and monks and Zen masters recognized that as just a part of life. In America, we're in this "Go, go, go" power positive thinking society, that we think there's no such thing as evil or that we can overcome it by the proper social program or going to the right school, etc. But George Lucas was right: The dark force is there. And we have to fight it in ourselves everyday. It's always there, just like gravity, and it's always keeping us from being able to fly. Resistance is the same.

Ishita: I think about people who've made "it" at the top of their game. They're putting stuff out into the world but it's clear that Resistance still comes up. I'm learning that no matter what, there are always challenges and that no one really has it "made."

Steve: I don't think anyone has it made at all. In fact, I love stories when an artist or a writer tells the various hells they went through who we now look at and think, "Wow, they must have been at the top of their game!" And then you realize that no, they were going through a divorce or lawsuits were filed against them, or their kids were sick or whatever. Yet they still did it. That's just the way it is. It's what separates the men from the boys, so to speak. There's a famous story of Picasso after he had finished about 24 paintings for his next show. He invited his agent or his manager to his studio to look at the paintings and as Picasso was looking at them with his manager, he started to hate them. He grabbed a painting knife and started slashing the paintings. The manager absolutely freaked out and said, "NO, NO, NO!" but Picasso kept slashing until they were all ruined. Then he went back to the drawing board.

Ishita: That's crazy—I had never heard that story! It shows just how powerful Resistance can really be. Switching gears to doing the work, how do you choose what's next for you? How do you recognize a new challenge and mix it up for yourself?

Steve: I think you're always starting from scratch when you come to a new project, Ishita. I always want to do something that number one I love—that just seizes me, rather than try to second-guess the marketplace. I also want to do something that's new and that will make me stretch. At the same time I don't want to go too far because I think that you can lose readers and your audience, so you go a half step at a time. You have to do something where you say, "I don't know if I can pull this off." And in fact that you really think, "I don't think I can pull this off." You want that feeling. So you'll have to use new muscles and try something different. Fail, fail, fail, succeed, fail, fail, fail, succeed; That's kind of the way it goes. I'm definitely a believer that you have to be as fearless as you can be. Usually the projects that work out best for me are the ones that I think to myself no one in the world is going to be interested in this except me. I'm starting a new one now, which I'm not going to tell you about, but I have that exact feeling, that I must be crazy to do this because no one will care about it but me. But I'm interested in it and so I'm doing it.

Ishita: The filmmaker Mira Nair said, "The more specific you get with your story, the more universal it becomes." So the more you do what you want and what lights your fire, the more people will resonate with it. That you delve so deeply into the story that interests you and you think, "Why would anyone else be interested in this?" but it's exactly that reason that people will be interested in it.

Steve: I think that's exactly true, Ishita. Like when you wrote me that email describing the MBA program you were a part of and how great it was, but also how challenging it was and that you cried every night. Then you wrote back and said, "Perhaps don't publish that part?" and I thought it was actually the most charming and most involving part of our conversation about it because when I read that, I literally lit up and I said to myself, "Ah, I can just see it..." So you're right. That's a specific detail that really makes something universal because we all feel, "Yeah, I was crying every night too" at some point in time in our lives.

Ishita: As creators we collaborate and work on teams, but being alone is the nature of the job of being an artist or writer. How do you hold yourself accountable when it's just you, solo—with no boss or "job" to hold yourself to? For example, how did you finally write your novel while you were living in your car with just your typewriter and no one else to motivate you?

Steve: That's a great question. I just ran away from it for so long and in so many different avenues that proved to be dead ends, that I just ran out of places to run to. So the pain of not doing it was worse than the pain of doing it. I never really thought about it from an accountable point of view because I just had to do it, there was no question. I thought, "If I were to crap out now, I'd just have to hang myself." So for me at least, I don't need anybody else's opinion to make me go forward. I just know that I'll be so unhappy inside myself if I don't. And vice versa. I know I'll feel good at the

end of the day when I do put in the work and do what I need to do. I've done so many thousands of days where the day starts and there's such huge Resistance but I push through and by the end of the day I feel great. I feel good that I've trained myself to know that that's the only way to do it.

Ishita: I'm reading a memoir by Haruki Murakami, in which he talks about training himself for over 25 years. Solid days of putting in the work and training in the craft of writing and in running.

Steve: That's exactly right. It is like training yourself. I always say that habit is a mighty ally for us. And that's what Murakami probably meant. He gets up and laces up his shoes and doesn't even think about it. The thought of "Should I crap out today?" may cross his mind, but the habit is so strong that he's on autopilot. We need that to some extent. We need every resource we can to break through that Resistance.

Ishita: Who is a mentor of yours—someone who has helped you or given advice that's really stuck with you?

Steve: I have probably a dozen mentors, a lot of who are my friends and peers, where we've traded encouragement and support and tips, that type of thing. But one in particular stands out: Norm Stall, whom I mention in *Do the Work*. Norm is probably the closest thing to a real mentor to me. His attitude is just no BS at all. He says, "Just sit down and do the work, Steve." He has no patience with anybody that fiddles around. He's really hardcore and at the same time very funny. He just cuts through it all even when I'm whining, and it's almost like boot camp. He's probably my most mentor-y mentor.

Ishita: And I know you help many people yourself—like that man who emailed you. What other advice do you give people?

Steve: It's kind of frustrating actually, Ishita, because practically nobody listens to you. That's why I'd rather write about it than try to pump someone up. But the main advice I give is simply to do what you need to do; don't talk about it, just sit down and do it. Stop talking right now and go do it. There's just no substitute for action. You can't not do anything, you must try to do something new. That's the way it is today, people have to be more entrepreneurial and there's no way around it. Certainly if you're an artist you just have to start. And then keep going. There's no alternative because the world is moving too fast.

Ishita: What about beginners who aren't sure of their voice yet, and I'd consider myself in that group—people who are trying to find their voice. The running memoir is beautiful because so much of it is shaped by his personality, his voice.

Steve: That's valid for someone to say and it goes back to what Charles Bukowski said, that he wrote for thirty years before he wrote a single sentence he felt was true. And I know Henry Miller and Hemingway said similar things. It's really hard to find your voice and there's no way to find it except to keep trying and trying and trying. Back in the day, I would just sit down and copy pages and pages of Henry Miller or Walker Percy on an old manual typewriter, just copy it word for word. It was not to so much learn whatever tricks they had, but to try and feel what a real voice felt like, even if it was somebody else's voice. There's no way around this as a writer. Unless you're really lucky, it just takes years because what you're trying to chip away at is that self-consciousness, that second-guessing of yourself. In a way it's like meditation. Not that I'm a meditator, but I've read about it. You're trying to get past all those false voices in your head until your real voice finally appears. And I think it only finally appears when everything else has been completely exhausted. You can't cheat anymore. You're just so tired that finally, your real voice blurts out. And you go "Wow, where did that come from?!"

It's like in the movie *Black Swan*, where Natalie Portman needs to get in touch with her dark side before she could play the black swan. Her teacher put her through the paces and made her do it again and again and exhausted her until she sort of got to that point where she could break through. So it's cliché, but it's true. I don't blame anyone for saying "I can't find my voice." But the answer is you just have to keep trying. Wait for it to come. In 10 or 20 years down the line after you've beaten your head in the wall. Then the question is how much do you want it? This isn't a game, and it's not for the faint of heart. If you want it, you've got to pay the price. You've got to bleed a little.

In a way I think you've got to be a little crazy to want to do this sort of thing. You do. You're not really a normal person, just like Natalie Portman's character's not normal, wanting to be this prima ballerina. And being this way drives her crazy. But, you've got to be a little crazy to want to do this sort of stuff.



Why pay extra for a collectible? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/why-pay-extra-for-a-collectible.html>)

April 21, 2011

Why pay for a book at all?

When you think about it, there's really no compelling reason to buy a book that you don't need to read right now and own forever. The local library, after all, will be happy to lend you a copy.

And if you want to be informed, there are plenty of ways to find out what's in a typical non-fiction book. The idea isn't protected, the Cliffs Notes (<https://sivers.org/book>) might suffice.

And yet we buy books. Some of us (pointing finger at myself) buy a *lot* of books.

A book is a fabulous souvenir, a long-lasting, easily displayed, easily shared, makes-you-happy remembrance of an idea. Buying a book is a little bit of philanthropy, a way to support an author you respect. A book, multiplied, is a personal library, and a personal library is a testament to your curiosity, generosity and intellect.

(<https://www.amazon.com/Work-Limited-Deluxe-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1936719045/permissionmarket>) So, yes, go find out the thing you need to know, right now, from Wikipedia. But yes, also yes, go own that treasured idea or story in hardcover.



Which leads to our line of collectible books. *Do the Work* (<https://www.amazon.com/Work-Limited-Deluxe-Steven-Pressfield/dp/1936719045/permissionmarket>), our latest bestseller, comes in a \$65 collectible edition. Limited to just a few hundred. Signed by the author. (Benefiting the author). And packaged with a laser engraved hunk of steel that you can slam on your desk, throw through a window or lend to a friend. Who definitely doesn't own one.

Collectible editions aren't for everyone. Which is precisely the point. I wish other publishers would sell them to readers like us. If you keep buying them, we'll keep making them (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Limited-Deluxe-Seth-Godin/dp/1935597884/permissionmarket>).



It's time to Do the Work (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/do-the-work.html>)

April 20, 2011

Are you getting in your way of producing great work? Have you started a project but never finished? Would you like to do work that matters, but don't know where to start?

Today we're proud to publish our second title, *Do the Work*

([https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719010/ref=pd_lpo_k2_dp_sr_1?](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719010/ref=pd_lpo_k2_dp_sr_1?pf_rd_p=486539851&pf_rd_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf_rd_t=201&pf_rd_i=B004PGO25O&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_r=00X1DHCZ243N5VYBG)

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[D42](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719010/ref=pd_lpo_k2_dp_sr_1?pf_rd_p=486539851&pf_rd_s=lpo-top-stripe-1&pf_rd_t=201&pf_rd_i=B004PGO25O&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_r=00X1DHCZ243N5VYBG)) by Steven Pressfield. A weapon against Resistance, this manifesto will teach you how to start before you're ready and get out of your own way.

The enemy is Resistance—our chattering brain, which, if we give it so much as a nanosecond, will start producing excuses, alibis, transparent self-justifications and a million reasons why we can't/shouldn't/won't do what we know we need to do.

What are Resistance's greatest hits? An excerpt from *Do the Work*, here are the activities that most commonly elicit Resistance:

1. *The pursuit of any calling in writing, painting, music, film, dance, or any creative art, however marginal or unconventional.*
2. *The launching of any entrepreneurial venture or enterprise, for profit or otherwise.*
3. *Any diet or health regimen.*
4. *Any program of spiritual advancement.*
5. *Any activity whose aim is the acquisition of chiseled abdominals.*
6. *Any course or program designed to overcome an unwholesome habit or addiction.*
7. *Education of every kind.*
8. *Any act of political, moral, or ethical courage, including the decision to change for the better some unworthy pattern of thought or conduct in ourselves.*
9. *The undertaking of any enterprise or endeavor whose aim is to help others.*
10. *Any act that entails commitment of the heart—the decision to get married, to have a child, to weather a rocky patch in a relationship.*
11. *The taking of any principled stand in the face of adversity.*

In other words, any act that rejects immediate gratification in favor of long-term growth, health, or integrity.

Or, expressed another way, any act that derives from our higher nature instead of our lower. Any of these acts will elicit Resistance.

Get your copy now. *Do the Work* is available for free on Kindle (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/permissionmarket>) (thanks to GE) and for purchase in hardcover (<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1936719010/permissionmarket>), 5-pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-Pack-Designed-Share/dp/1936719029/permissionmarket>) and 48-pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-Work-48-Pack-Designed/dp/1936719037/permissionmarket>).



Tales of the Revolution is now available! (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/tales-of-the-revolution-now-available-omg.html>)

April 19, 2011

To all who contributed to *Tales of the Revolution*....it's finally available (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B004TTHL46>).

As you hopefully remember, inspired by Seth Godin's *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002/>), a few weeks ago The Domino Project launched *Tales of the Revolution: True Stories of People Poking the Box and Making a Difference*. Thanks to you, we received hundreds of submissions from the self-starters among us.

One person lobbied congress for better veteran benefits, others wrote books, including an e-book about great running spots around the world, a few helped to start schools and improve education, and many raised money and gave it away in new and unique ways.

Many of these entries are now available until May 19th in a free Kindle edition at Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B004TTHL46>). Even if you don't own a Kindle, you can still read the ebook with the Kindle app for your smart phone or computer.

Stories that didn't make the final version deserve just as much attention and we'll profile some of them here on the blog. Stay tuned for great examples of those who deserve to be singled out for going above and beyond. They deserve thanks for all of their innovation, as do those of you who introduced them to us and made your vote count!

Feel free to share this with your friends. They can sign up here (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//subscribe>) for more news from The Domino Project.



Two of the things that make a book, a book (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/two-of-the-things-that-make-a-book-a-book.html>)

April 16, 2011

1. Kevin Kelly has a fabulous (as usual) post (http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2011/04/what_books_will.php) about the nature of a book. In essence, it's a container for an idea.

The web isn't/can't be a book because it has no edges, no start, no finish. Crowdsourcing and comments and multimedia to infinity all take away something about a book's nature. On the other hand, a book on the Kindle is clearly a book. Paper has nothing to do with it.

2. For 500 years, a book has been something that can be the work of a single individual, working hard, for perhaps a year. This is a huge element of what makes a book, a book. If I can write a book every day, the economics are different. If a book needs a producer and a director and a makeup guy and a bunch of technicians and a screenwriter... then it's a movie/a project, it's not a book.

The magical combination of [a big slice of a single author's time] with [this can be the vision of an individual] establishes the book as unique. Technology threatens both, in both directions. at the same time it opens up the opportunity to make a book available to more people than ever before.



Organizing the tribe, leading, teaching, aiding... (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/organizing-the-tribe-leading-teaching-aiding.html>)

April 15, 2011

I just heard about a new ebook (https://www.amazon.com/Aftershocks-Stories-Japan-Earthquake-ebook/dp/B004VP3KHK/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1302544589&sr=8-1) by and for Japanese earthquake survivors.

Jim writes,

I'm not sure if you've come across Quakebook: it's a collection of short stories by people who were in the earthquake in Japan on March 11. It was inspired and compiled in record time by a group of volunteers all connected by Twitter. All proceeds from the sale of the book will go to the Japan Red Cross Society.

My company was fortunate to play a role publishing the book, which went live on Amazon on Wednesday. It's in digital format only for the time being – but a print version will come later in the year.

Quakebook is a classic example of a Tribe brought together by social media and through a shared desire to help. The Tribe are all now actively promoting the book across Twitter and Facebook. For the print version, the Tribe is moving away from the idea of using a publisher and will almost certainly use Kickstarter to raise the necessary funds – again retaining the ethos of the Tribe in the initiative.

People can buy the book at Amazon UK <http://amzn.to/qbuk> (<https://amzn.to/qbuk>) and Amazon US <http://amzn.to/quakebkus> (<https://amzn.to/quakebkus>)

They can also follow @quakebook on Twitter, re-tweet the #quakebook hashtag, like the Quakebook page on Facebook <http://on.fb.me/htJxCw> (<https://on.fb.me/htJxCw>), or simply express their support at the Quakebook site <http://bit.ly/qukbook>

Help without connection isn't worth nearly as much. Thanks Jim.



Our latest manifesto



(<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch->

[ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4))

What is The Domino Project?

The Domino Project is named after the domino effect—one powerful idea spreads down the line, pushing from person to person. Learn more → ([/about](#))

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THE
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IDEAS THAT SPREAD, WIN.

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The end of pre-orders (pub date and its discontents)

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/the-end-of-pre-orders-pub-date-and-its-discontents.html>)

April 10, 2011

Book publishers make a big deal out of pub date, about getting pre-orders and maximizing launch bang. I maintain that pre-orders are now mostly antiquated.

Since 1900, the expression *publication date* meant, “it takes a year for us to bring a book to the world, and exhausted, we’ll cross the finish line on Day x and that’s when you can buy it.”

Publishers had to enforce against booksellers selling before Day x because not all stores got their books on the same day.

Online sellers, of course, found out about books months before they were actually available to read, but were also prohibited from selling them. But not from taking orders.

Publishers and authors went along with this, because in many ways, pre-sales are good.

Pre-sales help juice up bestseller list status, because if you queue em up, you get credit all at once.

Pre-sales are also helpful for inventory management. Since it takes a while for re-orders, knowing that the demand is there can smooth things out.

And so, in the case of *Do The Work* (<https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O>), there’s a pre-sale period. Publishing the Kindle edition before pub date doesn’t work, because it would seriously penalize non-digital readers. And it wouldn’t be pub date if the book came out before then...

We announced the GE sponsorship early because we didn't want people to start paying for the digital edition only to find out on pub date that we had a sponsor and it was free. That would punish those that stepped up early with their wallets open.

And so...

You can pre-order the digital edition (or the hardcover, fine with us!) but no one gets it until April 20th.

As ebooks become ever more dominant, the nature of pre-orders makes less and less sense, particularly since the Internet has trained us to wait for nothing.



Lightning announcement coming Thursday (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/04/lightning-round-post.html>)

April 6, 2011

update: While they last, 62% off the 5 pack of *Poke the Box*: <http://amzn.to/S7R3>
(<https://amzn.to/S7R3>) Thanks for your patience.

Thursday morning we're going to announce a special four hour deal, but we can't talk about it early (and you don't get it if you're late). If you want to be certain you hear about it, you'll need to make sure you follow us on twitter (@projectdomino (<https://twitter.com/projectdomino>)) or watch the blog.



Changing the game: Do the Work is free for now (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/changing-the-game-do-the-work-is-free-for-now.html>)

March 28, 2011

The next title from the Domino Project is by bestselling author Steven Pressfield. He's the author of *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, the upcoming thriller *The Profession*
(https://www.amazon.com/Profession-Thriller-Steven-Pressfield/dp/0385528736/ref=sr_1_1?

ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1301000287&sr=1-1), and most important, the classic *The War of Art*. (https://www.amazon.com/War-Art-Through-Creative-Battles/dp/0446691437/ref=ntt_at_ep_dpi_1)

I don't think a more important book on art and shipping and fear has ever been written. *The War of Art* changed me, probably forever, and I know it's had that impact on hundreds of thousands of creators.

That Steve is entrusting his new manifesto *Do the Work* ([https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?](https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&qid=1301000199&sr=8-1)

ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&qid=1301000199&sr=8-1) to us is thrilling. *Do the Work* is a logical outgrowth of the writing in *The War of Art*, but it's quite clearly a manifesto, a short, powerful, memorable rant on what it means to do work that matters. This book is so important, I'd like everyone to read it again and again.

And now they can.

Today we're announcing a significant breakthrough in book publishing, and it may be a first: the digital edition of a bestselling author's next book is available for free, thanks to a generous sponsor. Because most of the costs of an ebook are fixed (extra copies cost far less than additional copies of a paper book) there's a great opportunity for a sponsor to subsidize the distribution—readers get the ebook for free, the sponsor benefits by being connected with a great work and perhaps some gratitude from the reader for bringing them an idea that might bring positive change.

(<https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O>)The folks at GE (<http://www.ge.com>) have stepped up and they're our first ebook sponsors. Beginning today until shortly after the Kindle edition is available on April 20th, the sponsored edition is free.



Click here ([https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?](https://www.amazon.com/Do-the-Work-ebook/dp/B004PGO25O/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&qid=1301000199&sr=8-1)

ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2&qid=1301000199&sr=8-1), order it and it will be automatically delivered on pub date. You can read it on a Kindle, an iPad, an iPhone a PC and more. (If you already ordered your copy, your payment will be credited back to you).

We're announcing this first to our readers on this blog, but feel free to spread the word. It's only going to be free for a limited time, so don't tarry.

My hope is that other sponsors (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/special-sales-the-key-word-being-special.html>) will step up and allow us to do promotions for our other books as well. In the meantime, be prepared to be changed by Steve's book, and thanks for reading and for spreading the word.



Voting now closed for Initiator Contest submissions (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/voting-now-open-for-initiator-contest-submissions.html>)

March 22, 2011

Last week, we announced the Call for Initiators: *Poke the Box* Contest (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/call-for-initiators.html>)

200+ submissions later, you have confirmed what we already know: a little initiative can make a big difference. Now it's time to cast your vote, and we've created a special site (<http://vote.thedominoproject.com>) for that very purpose.

Here's how you can help:

1. Visit the site: <http://vote.thedominoproject.com> (<http://vote.thedominoproject.com>)
2. Rate the posts (we realize you might not have time to read them all, but give it a shot)
3. Spread the word and let others know that voting is open

Voting starts now and will be closed on March 23rd at 5PM EST.

With your help, we will take the favorites and compile them into a free Kindle book – due out on April 11th. We reserve the right to override submissions if the votes are gamed or otherwise manipulated, and we hope everyone will play fair.

Thanks for your continued support.



Word on the Street: Roundup for Poke the Box (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/word-on-the-street-roundup-for-poke-the-box.html>)

March 21, 2011

Poke the Box has created a wave of conversations online and off. Last week we shared examples of individuals who've "poked" in their lives. These examples encouraged us (and we hope you too) to keep seeking out parts of our lives that we need to experiment with, where we can initiate and where we can push ourselves harder.

This week we'd like to share a roundup of interviews and excerpts from the online and media world. Fast Company, Forbes, and a bevy of great bloggers talked to Seth about publishing and how the industry is changing, including why the Domino Project is doing things differently and how we're poking.

Below are links to check out. We hope you enjoy.

Len Ederly (<http://www.thekindlechronicles.com/2011/03/05/tkc-137-seth-godin/>) talks to Seth about publishing and the Domino Project.

Mark Ramsey (<http://www.markramseymedia.com/2011/03/seth-godin-wants-radio-to-start-something/>) and how radio wants to start something new.

John Jantsch (<http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/2011/03/01/seth-godin-pokes-his-own-box/>) at Duct Tape Marketing talks about what it means to "poke" the box.

Phil Simon (<http://www.philsimonsystems.com/blog/writing/publishing-writing-blog/15-minutes-with-seth-godin/>) talks to Seth about changes in technology.

Tony Morgan (<http://tonymorganlive.com/2011/03/07/poke-the-box-interview/>) and how to grow from "poking."

Mitch Joel (<http://www.twistimage.com/podcast/archives/spos-243---its-time-to-ship-with-seth-godin/>)'s podcast about the Domino Project and publishing.

Jared at Under 30 CEO (<http://under30ceo.com/seth-godin-interview-the-riskiest-thing-we-can-do-right-now-is-nothing/>) talks about how to do risky things.

Fast Company (<https://www.fastcompany.com/1736120/poke-the-box-seth-godin>) on how not to be afraid of good ideas: An excerpt from *Poke the Box*.

Barry Moltz (<http://www.openforum.com/idea-hub/topics/marketing/article/seth-godin-wants-you-to-poke-the-box-barry-moltz>) interviews Seth on Amex Open forum on why he's made the move from traditional publishing.

David Garland (<http://blog.therisetothetop.com/2011/03/seth-godin-future-of-books-bookstores-publishing/>) and Seth talk about the future of books, bookstores, and publishing.

Mike Stelzner (<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/transforming-the-book-industry-how-seth-godin-is-poking-the-box/>) talks to Seth in the Social Media Examiner about changing the book industry.

The New Yorker (<https://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/books/2011/03/in-the-news-137.html>) picks up Michael's interview with seth in their "Book Bench" roundup.

Forbes (<https://blogs.forbes.com/lisaarthur/2011/02/22/seth-godin-pokes-the-box/>) talks about "poking the box."

David Meerman Scott (<http://www.webinknow.com/2011/03/seth-godin-video-interview-on-the-dead-and-his-new-book-poke-the-box.html>) on marketing and The Grateful Dead.



Books, notes, tweets and the change (your change) **(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/books-notes-tweets-and-the-change.html>)**

March 19, 2011

My friend Fred Wilson (one of the great VCs of all time) did a talk at Harvard Business School. In his post (http://www.avc.com/a_vc/2011/02/mba-tuesday.html) on it, he said that he was thrilled that the professor encouraged the class to tweet their notes.

I confess to being fascinated, mystified and horrified by people who tweet notes in real time. I mean, here is one of the giants of his industry, and the best the students can do with their attention is tweet short sentences, out of context, to an unknown audience of busy people who are

reading hundreds of other out of context abbreviated notes at the same time? Waste a wasted opportunity.

From the point of view of the person reading these tweets, it's hard to see how you're actually going to learn enough and be moved enough to change your point of view about something.

From the sender's point of view, (the student in that room with Fred) what if you sat quietly and actually gulped in all that was being said and displayed and communicated? What if you were there, *right there*, not halfway there and halfway (mentally) across the world? What if you were interrupting Fred with questions, preparing counter arguments and actually engaging with him?



interesting #HBSLTV today, start-ups flush with funds can still be lean Zynga game teams have fixed budget & time to prove PM fit @ericries
about 19 hours ago via web

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/tweet.jpg>) I get the flux, the flow, the connective power of social media. It's incredible to be able to widen your circle, to be aware of so many people and so many inputs. I wonder though... Is one status update enough to get you to alter a habit or make a better decision?

This is why books matter. Books, used properly, immerse us in a single idea. Books bring a voice into our head, create a different brain chemistry, open doors to a more powerful lever, a learning that can yes, change us. Dozens (perhaps hundreds) of times in my life, a book has changed my mind. So have some powerful lectures or direct engagements with teachers or mentors. These are the moments of true change, times when we are entrained with the message, when we feel the learning happening in real time.

Yes, tweet. Yes, stay in sync. Yes, absorb the lessons that come from many inputs, over time.

The quiet enjoyment that books (and great teachers) bring, the uncomfortable place they bring us when we're open enough to let them in and to be honest with ourselves... this is precious.



Free eBook: SXSU Pokes (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/free-ebook-sxsw-pokes.html>)

March 18, 2011

Now, more than ever, we need to *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002>). We need to stop waiting for a road map and start drawing one instead. We need to start doing the work that we're capable of, the work that matters.

This past weekend, I attended SXSW. Not only was it a blast but I met a lot of ambitious doers who are poking the box. People who are starting projects, making a ruckus, and taking what feels like a risk.

We've collected some of the best stories and organized them into an eBook called *SXSW Pokes* (https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/SXSW_Pokes.pdf). You'll find 50 inspiring stories about taking initiative from accomplished entrepreneurs and up-and-coming stars. Download the free eBook (https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/SXSW_Pokes.pdf).

From advertising entrepreneur Cindy Gallop (<http://cindygallop.com/>) to tech founder Loic Le Meur (<http://loiclemeur.com/>), from best-selling author Gretchen Rubin (<http://gretchenrubin.com/>) to professional storyteller C.C. Chapman (<http://www.cc-chapman.com/>), from eFlirt expert Laurie Davis (<http://www.eflirtexpert.com/>) to professional wingman Thomas Edwards (<http://theprofessionalwingman.com/>). The eBook also includes Jenny Blake (<http://lifeaftercollege.org/>), Laura Fitton (<http://pistachioconsulting.com/>), Nick Reese (<http://www.nicholasreese.com/>), Sean Ogle (<http://www.seanogle.com/>), Becky Johns (<http://becky-johns.com/>), Andy Drish (<http://www.andydrish.com/>), Steve Garfield (<http://www.stevegarfield.com/Site/Welcome.html>), Rob Wu (<https://about.me/robwu>), Clay Hebert (<http://dailysense.com/>), Melissa Pierce (<http://lifeinperpetualbeta.com/>), Amber Naslund (<http://www.brasstackthinking.com/>), AJ Leon (<http://ajleon.me/>), David Spinks (<http://whatspinksthinks.com/>), Carla Blumenthal (<http://www.carlablumenthal.com/>), Ari Greenberg (<http://blog.arigreenberg.com/>), Jay Goldman (<http://jaygoldman.com/about/>), Nick Seguin (<http://www.nickseguin.com/>), and others.



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/SXSW_Pokes.pdf)

I hope these stories will give you the inspiration you need to Go Go Go.

Here's the deal: the eBook is free. Please download it, tweet it, and pass it along to your friends. Feel free to make up your own riff and share it on your blog too.

ps – shout out to Becky Johns (<http://becky-johns.com>) and C.C. Chapman (<http://www.cc-chapman.com/>) for contributing awesome SXSW photos to the eBook.



Special sales (the key word being special)

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/special-sales-the-key-word-being-special.html>)

March 16, 2011

Every large publisher has a Special Sales department. This is a group charged with selling books in volume to groups and corporations.

Stories of successful special sales are legendary. One personal finance author I know told me about selling a million copies of his book to a corporation. Most of the time, though, the special sales folks wait for the phone to ring.

Special sales can create magical upsides for all concerned. The margins on hardcover books are sufficient that the buyer can get a fabulous discount when she buys by the pallet. As a sales and marketing tool, books are powerful—no one throws out a book. Unlike a silkscreened beer-can cozy, a book communicates more than just a logo. Books work as a training tool internally, and they also create a generous opportunity for an organization to share an idea with customers or prospects. If you've ever been handed a book by someone who cared about you, you know what I mean.

The problem is this: in all my years working with traditional publishers, I never encountered the special sales group actually doing a good job of making special sales. There isn't a noticeable bias for action, a forward-moving imperative. For whatever reason, few special sales groups at traditional publishers seek out and then embrace the kind of organizations that could buy and distribute a ton of books. A wasted opportunity. For every section in the bookstore there are literally thousands of organizations that could benefit by using the right book in the right way.

At Domino, Lauryn Ballesteros (<mailto:lauryn@thedominoproject.com>) is in charge of our special sales effort. She's on the phone or at conferences every day, and it's working. Instead of waiting for the phone to ring, she's identifying the right organizations and reaching out to the key decision maker. The result is a significant number of new places our books will be distributed, new readers that will engage with them, and organizations that will benefit from being associated with a brand new book, hand delivered to the right reader at the right time.



Call for Initiators: Poke the Box Contest (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/call-for-initiators.html>)

March 14, 2011

Do you know someone who starts things? Someone who has poked, initiated, or done something remarkable? If so, we want to hear from you! (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//initiators>)

To celebrate the release *Poke the Box*, we're searching for examples of passionate self-starters who regularly go above and beyond to make a difference by *doing*. We'll be highlighting some of the entries right here on the blog, where you will be able to vote for your favorites. We will then include many of these inspirations in a free ebook for people who have bought the Kindle edition of *Poke the Box*. Look for it April 11th.

We need your help!

Send us a brief story (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//initiators>) (1,000 words or less) of someone you know who's poked the box and initiated something remarkable. Check back here on March 21st to vote on your favorites. Many entries then will be included in a free Kindle book (released April 11) automatically delivered to people who have bought *Poke the Box* on the Kindle.

Exactly what kinds of people are we looking for? Here's one example:

Jeremy Carter recently sent an email out to his company saying that every Monday morning for 30 minutes he would be teaching on a new book to whoever showed up. The first Monday Jeremy talked about Switch and two people showed up. They loved it and Jeremy's boss loved the initiative. The key lesson isn't that you have to change the world or have a huge scale—the lesson is that you have to step up, to start, to open the door.

We're interested in all great ideas – big or small!

The deadline for entry is March 17 at 5 pm EST. We expect a high-volume of entries and unfortunately, won't be able to honor late submissions. We'll announce some of our favorite entries here on the blog and as always, subscribers will hear about it first.

Looking forward to hearing your stories (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//initiators>) and thanks for leading!

Submit your story! (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//initiators>)



Dinner and a show (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/dinner-and-a-show.html>)

March 12, 2011

That's what most book publishers wonder about. Not just "how good is the book?" but, "can the author put on a show?"

The show is what sells books. If the author can promote, create a viral sensation, get media, do talks, sell in bulk—the book goes along for the ride.

This cripples great work, because great work without a great show can't easily break through.

One of the goals of the Domino Project is that readers who care about ideas will subscribe to this blog, our free newsletter. Over time, as our permission base grows, it will get ever easier to spread the word about books we think are worth sharing. We get to start with a larger base, and truly great work has a better chance to spread.

Maybe less of a show, more emphasis on dinner...



How Gary Vaynerchuk Pokes the Box (<https://www.thedomino.com/2011/03/how-gary-vaynerchuk-pokes-the-box.html>)

March 10, 2011

People who know Gary Vaynerchuk may think that taking risks come easy to him. As a bestselling author, blogger, and entrepreneur (founder of Wine Library and Vayner Media) maybe we think that his personality is suited to initiating, or that he always had support along the way.

On the contrary. Real life has a way of taking our assumptions and turning them upside down, and if we look closely at Gary's trajectory we see it's actually built on a foundation of getting criticized, of taking the risk even though people around him told him not to. It's also built on his ability to keep poking at authority and asking "why not?"

Here's a video Gary made on what it means to him to *Poke the Box*:

03:14



Luggage and the art of “Poking” (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/luggage-and-the-art-of-poking.html>)

March 9, 2011

Initiating takes guts, that much we know. Doing something different and standing out from the crowd usually brings up discomfort and social awkwardness – things we try to avoid. But the difference between someone who consistently initiates and takes risk and someone who doesn’t is slight. The main difference is that the former spends time *seeking* out discomfort. He’s used to “poking” and feeling uncomfortable and thus does so in small and big areas of his life. This takes training.

Poke the Box shows us that the only way to get comfortable poking in the big areas of life is to start small. Experiment with your normal routines. Do the opposite of what you’d normally do. Start making a difference to yourself and the people around you by *acting* differently. Drop out of your comfort zone and initiate things.

Glenn Auerbach did just this at Cleveland O’Hare airport last week. He made a difference to himself and his fellow passengers and solved a mutual problem by “poking.” To the people around him, Glenn’s ability to step out of his comfort zone benefitted him and countless others. That’s a common benefit of poking.

Below is the story Glenn sent us, and we're sharing it with you in the hopes that you'll see how simple it is to poke. It need not mean risking your life. It could just mean getting over your own baggage to do something differently.

"My plane from Cleveland to O'hare last night was one of those little prop jobs, so all of the passengers had to check their luggage at the gate. When we arrived, most of us, 30 or so, were waiting on the gangway for our checked luggage to be brought up. It was random and everybody was pretty groggy in the cold jetway, focused on getting their bag and moving on. After a few minutes of waiting, the side door opened and a luggage worker brought one bag out, and one lucky traveler got to go on their way.

I looked at the situation and realized that this was going to take awhile. And I had to go to the bathroom badly. I could stand there, patiently wait my turn, or get involved. I moved up to the front. Sure enough the luggage worker guy was unloading one piece at a time and walking the 3-4 steps, dropping the bag in the gangway, then walking back to grab another. I started helping, fire brigade style: As he took a piece of luggage off, instead of walking he'd hand to me and I'd turn and drop it on the gangway. Two guys now doing the job made it obviously much quicker than one.

After a few bags, I couldn't resist announcing to the group: "I get a first class upgrade for this."

Lucky for me, my bag was early in the pile, so once I had mine in hand I started up the gangway. I turned to look. Nobody took up the slack and filled in my spot. The luggage worker guy was back to his painfully slow one at a time unload. "Someone go help that guy," I advised. A youngish guy drew a smile and chimed in "I'll get it!" and started for the luggage."

You can find Glenn online at : www.saunatimes.com



Picked vs. spread (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/picked-vs-spread.html>)

March 8, 2011

Most non-fiction book publishing focuses on solving a problem for the bookstore and the bookstore visitor. The problem is something like this:

I need a book about Marx.

Can you help me find a great book about knitting?

I'm traveling tomorrow... got a good junky novel?

This explains, for example, the fabulous series of “for beginners” books from Pantheon (https://www.amazon.com/Marx-Beginners-Rius/dp/0375714618/ref=sr_1_19?ie=UTF8&qid=1299345645&sr=8-19). If you have a problem like this, they can solve it. Pick this book, they say to the seeker. If there are four picks to choose from and enough people choosing, you can do okay this way, solving information problems for those on a search.

The problem is that Google can probably solve it better.

Which leads to the alternative. Instead of books that seek to be one of many to be chosen by the shopper with a problem, there's the opportunity to publish books that spread, spread from someone who is in love with an idea to someone who *didn't even know they had the problem*.

And in every endeavor, there are far more people who don't know they need help.

The internet amplifies this behavior. The net makes it easier than ever to spread solutions that touch you, books that matter, ideas that made a difference.

The implication for publishers and readers is this: I think the glory days of publishing to fill a niche are gone. There's just no reason for it, we have enough books in the world to solve most of these book problems. The new frontier is to publish books that spread.



Poke the Box: The Workbook (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/poke-the-box-the-workbook.html>)

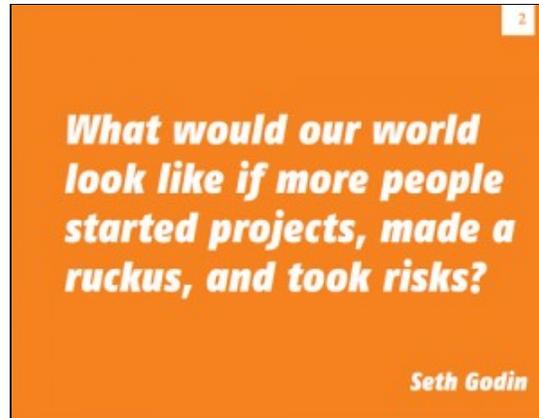
March 4, 2011

Hot off the idea press, we're thrilled to announce *Start Now (Poke the Box: The Workbook)* (https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/PoketheBox_Workbook.pdf), a free PDF workbook to go hand-in-hand with *Poke the Box* (https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0). It's a special resource we've created for the initiators out there who are ready to go go go! We're sharing it with you before we tell anyone else.

This workbook was written to ask one basic question: What would our world look like if more people started projects, made a ruckus, and took risks?



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/PoketheBox_Workbook.pdf)



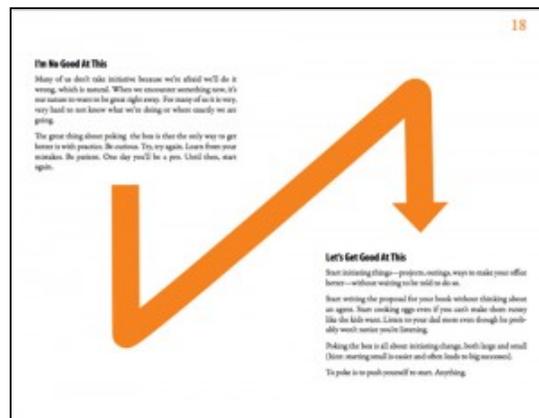
(https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/PoketheBox_Workbook.pdf)

We've filled these pages with quotes,

action items, and excerpts to light a fire under you and get you started. There are more questions here than answers. That's intentional. The answers come from you. This will require you to explore corners of your life where you hesitate, procrastinate, or weasel your way out because you're afraid.



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/PoketheBox_Workbook.pdf)



(https://www.thedominoproject.com/_/PoketheBox_Workbook.pdf)

If you are up for the challenge of

helping us make a ruckus, be warned that we are going to push you to go beyond the point of no return, to commit yourself and make something happen.

Update: A big thank you to Glenn Meder who updated the workbook to make it more printer-friendly. His awesome new version is available for download at Trees vs Forest

(<https://glennmeder.wordpress.com/2011/03/09/printer-friendly-version-of-the-poke-the-box->

workbook/).



Tweeting a Q&A about *Poke the Box* (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/tweeting-poke-the-box.html>)

March 3, 2011

This Friday we're going to try something new—Seth on Twitter. (Yes, you heard that right. Seth. On Twitter.)

From 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. ET, author and original Domino Seth Godin will answer your questions about The Domino Project's newest book, *Poke the Box* using the @projectdomino (<https://twitter.com/projectdomino>) Twitter account. He'll answer questions as they come in and try to get to as many as he can.

Go ahead and follow us there, send in your questions with the hashtag #pokethebox (<https://twitter.com/#!/search/pokethebox>), and we'll send back answers.

My hope is that you'll bring your ideas and questions from the book, and join in on an hour of fast-moving interaction.



The siren song of pub day (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/03/the-siren-song-of-pub-day.html>)

March 1, 2011

Today's the first online sale day for the new book, *Poke the Box*. (https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002/ref=tmm_hrd_title_0)

Like theatrical producers on Broadway, staying up all night at Sardi's, waiting for the reviews, pub day has always been an important (and dramatic) event for book publishers. The internet has only made it more so, because it's so easy to frontload your promotion, jack up your first day sales, manipulate the bestseller lists and generally create a kerfuffle.

In the 1960s, it wasn't unusual for a book to spend a year on the bestseller lists. Today, in books, music and movies, it's been compressed. A movie has a hit weekend, maybe three. A song hits the radio for a few days. And books—books are in and then they're out.

I'm personally exhausted from this rollercoaster. I don't think it does service to the books or to their readers. Now that online noise has crescendoed, the upside of short term sales manipulation is diminished, and the best books don't really reach everyone they should.

I care far more about what one reader says to another. I care about the impact the book has in a meeting that hasn't even been scheduled yet.

Tell me how your book is doing in six months, not in six hours.



Reminder: Monday is the last day to pre-order (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/02/reminder-monday-is-the-last-day-to-pre-order.html>)

February 26, 2011

The Kindle pre-order gig for *Poke the Box* (https://www.amazon.com/Poke-the-Box-ebook/dp/B004J4XG00/ref=tmm_kin_title_0?ie=UTF8&m=AG56TWVU5XWC2) is almost over. The \$1 price goes up at the end of Monday.

Also, you can find the list of iPad, PC and Mac apps to read it with right here

([https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=amb_link_353398442_29?](https://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html/ref=amb_link_353398442_29?ie=UTF8&docId=1000493771&pf_rd_m=ATVPDKIKX0DER&pf_rd_s=browse&pf_rd_r=09CZK3ZEB9EK42HQ8TXK&pf_rd_t=101&pf_rd_p=1288532182&pf_rd_i=1268192011)

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We love our subscribers (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//subscribe-to-this-newsletter>).

Thanks for spreading the word. (PS if you prefer, you can follow this newsletter on Twitter

(<https://twitter.com/#!/projectdomino>) for faster service.)

PS The UK edition is here (https://www.amazon.co.uk/Poke-the-Box/dp/B004J4XG00/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1298463855&sr=1-1). There are also a few countries (I've heard about Pakistan and Singapore) where Amazon is not currently offering Kindle editions. I'm sorry about that. Soon, I hope.



Unleashing The Domino Project (<https://www.thedomino-project.com/2011/02/unleashing-the-domino-project.html>)

February 24, 2011

The digital revolution is unleashing creativity all around us. All you need is a laptop and an internet connection. To quote Seth: *“This is the best shot you’ve got.”*

Not everyone believes the ease of entry is good for us. Does allowing everyone equal footing on the playing field result in better art, film, music, and literature? What if this flood of new content is just drowning the true talent? Are we democratizing our culture or just promoting widespread mediocrity?

I’m new to the debate, and I’ve got a lot to learn. So I absorb as many smart, contrary opinions as I can. Next on my list of things to consume: *PressPausePlay* (<http://www.presspauseplay.com/>), a movie about hope, fear, and digital culture.

The film’s creators just released this (gorgeous) sneak peek which highlights Seth’s story about writing *Unleashing the Ideavirus* (<http://www.sethgodin.com/ideavirus/downloads/IdeavirusReadandShare.pdf>) and how ideas that spread win.

PressPausePlay Sneak Peek #1 - Seth Godin



We're very excited about the launch of *PressPausePlay* and would like to say a big thank you to the very smart Swedes at House of Radon for taking a compelling look at how the digital revolution is unleashing creativity all around us. These are clearly artists who get it.



All the way to a dollar (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/02/all-the-way-to-a-dollar.html>)

February 21, 2011

Last week, we ran an experiment, in which we challenged readers to sign up to our blog/newsletter and promised to lower the pre-order price of the Kindle edition of my new book in exchange.

Tens of thousands of people visited, tweeted, liked, passed on, signed up and generally made a ruckus. Thrilling.

On a technicality, we didn't hit our goal (yet), but it strikes me as perversely unfair to fail to reward the folks who *did* sign up. So, overcoming loud objections, I'm going to go ahead and set the **pre-order price of the Kindle edition at a buck (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-the-Box-ebook/dp/B004J4XG00/permissionmarket>)**. It goes back up March 1.

Thanks, as always, for poking.



Would Shakespeare tweet? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/02/would-shakespeare-tweet.html>)

February 15, 2011

Scott Turow, beloved novelist and now head of the Authors Guild, argues in the Times (https://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/15/opinion/15turow.html?_r=1&hp) that Shakespeare might have had trouble surviving in the world of the web, a place of “speedy, secret transmission of stolen goods.” Apparently, once you start working with the Author's Guild, something changes in your outlook. In the past, the Guild has spoken out against Amazon selling used books, against public libraries and against devices that allow people to have devices that enable the books they own to be digitally read to them.

The irony is thick here. First, Shakespeare never got a royalty check. Second, the only reason most people have even *heard* of the bard is that his plays can be produced for free, his plays are easily and cheaply found in many forms and editions and people can turn his work into movies without asking first. Shakespeare made a living based on people paying to come to his shows, live. Sort of the way a new breed of successful musicians (<http://www.kellerwilliams.net/>)are doing it today.

The music industry has been transformed by the spread of music online. The *industry* is reeling, but there's more music than ever before, listened to more often by more people. No, I don't expect the folks at Motown and BMG to like that, but it's true.

The freelance writing industry has been transformed by the rise of blogs as well. No longer can writers expect to earn a living getting paid by the word to write for magazines that were the only way to reach people. I think we can agree that there isn't a shortage of non-fiction expository writing, even though the industry has changed. Writers don't have to like that, but it's true.

Scott and his peers, arguing to maintain the status quo, are repeating the failed strategy of the RIAA and the record business instead of realizing what an opportunity the connectivity of the internet creates. All these readers! All these opportunities to build direct connections with them. All these chances to have your ideas spread...

Scott writes, [progress is] "... the result of abiding by rules that were carefully constructed and practices that were begun by people living in the long shadow of the Dark Ages. We tamper with those rules at our peril." He's a much better writer than I will ever be. But he's a lousy student of history. There are plenty of practices that were invented in the shadow of the Dark Ages that we're much better off without. Bloodletting, for example.

In a world where attention is the scarce resource, the enemy as Tim O'Reilly put it, is obscurity, not piracy. Particularly for the vast majority of the membership of the Author's Guild. You can't sue your way to attention, and we shouldn't legislate writing back to a world of scarcity.



Sign up to drive down the pre-order price for Poke the Box
(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/02/poke.html>)

February 13, 2011

How much should an ebook cost? It's a good question. Factor in printing and sales costs, and hardcover books have a good reason to cost \$20. Ebooks, though, are a whole new field and no one

03:10 |

has figured out the right answer.

Traditionally, readers have been charged \$9.99 for a book on the Kindle. What if, though, **the publisher lowered the price in exchange for the audience trading some attention?**

That's what I'd like to try. The final pre-order price for the Kindle edition of *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-the-Box-ebook/dp/B004J4XG00/permissionmarket>) will be determined by how many of you sign up to get our free online newsletter (<https://www.feedblitz.com/f/?Sub=720389>). We already have about 10,000 subscribers, so we've already lowered the price. (We started with a pre-order price of \$9.99—we're down \$2). Amazon has agreed to work with me in lowering the price *one more dollar for every 5,000 new people* who sign up. So we're starting at \$7.99.

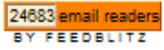
We'll keep going until we hit a buck. The deadline for this experiment is the end of the day on Friday, February 18th. (Watch this space as the final pre-order price changes...)

For every signup, we will lower the price – *all the way down to a dollar.*

That way, we'll be able to announce our new books to 50,000 of you now and then. (Of course, I'll never rent or sell your contact information to anyone).

On the 21st, we'll post the final pre-order price and point you to a link where you can get the ebook at that price. To get this price, you must order your Kindle copy any time before March 1. If you already ordered (before publication) you will automatically get the lowest pre-pub price, so no one gets stuck for ordering ahead of time. On pub date, the price will certainly go back up, so be sure to pre-order.

I hope you'll join in this experiment and learn about some cool new books at the same time. All you have to do is enter your email info or twitter info (<https://www.feedblitz.com/f/?Sub=720389>) and ask your friends to do the same. We'll keep you posted on our progress. The deadline for this experiment is the end of the day on Friday, February 18th.



(<https://www.feedblitz.com/f/?Sub=720389>) PS signing up (<https://www.feedblitz.com/f/?Sub=720389>)

for the newsletter doesn't obligate you to buy anything, ever. It's just a free newsletter with an update once or twice a week, you can unsubscribe whenever you like.



Why aren't there words on the cover of our books?

(<https://www.thedomino.com/2011/02/why-arent-there-words-on-the-cover-of-our-books.html>)

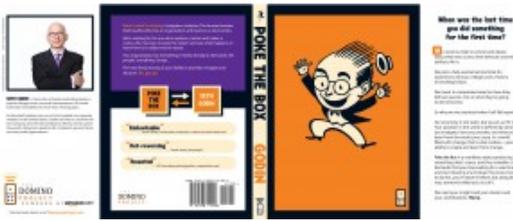
February 11, 2011

Four things worth noticing about the new covers from The Domino Project...

1. The most noticeable: no words on the cover. Who needs them? When you see the book online, it's always accompanied by lots of text. You read the text on the screen, the cover is the icon. Also... when the book is on your desk, if someone asks, "what's that?" you can talk about the book. On the other hand, if it has a bunch of text, the person knows what it is, hence no discussion.
2. Good spine. That's in honor of Fixabook. The lizard? He's in honor of the lizard brain and the resistance that keeps us all paralyzed.
3. Big wide flaps. Why not? They're free. More room to tell your story.
4. Micro-blurbs. I challenged the people who read it to come up with one word blurbs. After all, it's the enthusiasm that matters. Both Sarah and Annie felt compelled to invent their own words...

The front cover is my favorite, perhaps, of all the books I've ever worked on. I hope you like it.

You can see the full sample by clicking below and read a cover review at Fixabook (<http://www.fixabook.com/covers/poke-the-box>).



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp->

[content/uploads/2011/02/BookCover_PokeTheBox_Master1.jpg](https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/BookCover_PokeTheBox_Master1.jpg))



The joy of collectibles (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/02/the-joy-of-collectibles.html>)

February 4, 2011

I just got the photos back from the letterpress shop in Seattle that's printing the covers, posters and book plates for the collectible edition of *Poke the Box* (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Limited-Deluxe-Seth-Godin/dp/1935597884/permissionmarket>). We only made 400 (which is a good thing, because my carpal tunnel is killing me from the signing) and many have already been sold. One thing I learned is that of course, back in the day, book plates didn't have adhesive pre-applied on the back... instead, they're stout hand-printed cards that you can affix to a book or save as a bookmark or wall trophy.

We're hard at work at inventing collectible-worthy bonuses to go with the other titles we'll be launching. It's a fascinating exercise—when you're only producing 400 or a thousand (or fifty) of something, your thought process needs to work very differently. The goal in each case is to do something remarkable, something that celebrates the texture and connection that occurs when a human touches what you're holding. If you have suggestions, we'd love to hear (<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dHp2d2p4dEhGTjlsC3YnVBSGZDdXc6MQ>) them.



(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/collectiblesigning.jpg>)



Poke the Box, our first title, is now ready for pre-order

(<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/poke-the-box-our-first-title-is-now-ready-for-pre-order.html>)

January 31, 2011

The first book from the Domino Project (/about) is ready for pre-order. (Hurry... the limited edition of 400 probably won't last very long). Subscribers to this blog get first shot, of course.

Poke the Box comes in hardcover (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Seth-Godin/dp/1936719002/permissionmarket>), Kindle (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-the-Box-ebook/dp/B004J4XG00/permissionmarket>) and a limited edition (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Limited-Deluxe-Seth-Godin/dp/1935597884/permissionmarket>) signed copy with a letterpress cover and a poster as well. The Kindle edition will run on any PC or Mac as well as the iPad and the (real) Kindle. If the price goes down between now and pub date on March 1, Amazon will only charge you the lowest price.

Hosting a party? Teaching a crowd? Yes, there's a 5 pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-Pack-Designed-Share/dp/1935597698/permissionmarket>) and a 52 pack (<https://www.amazon.com/Poke-Box-52-Pack-Designed/dp/1935597701/permissionmarket>) as well. A key tenet of our project is that ideas that spread win, and books are just too hard to spread. To make it easier, we've packaged up and discounted the books so you can hand them out.

First come first served. I hope they help you make a difference.

Long ago, Seth Godin was one of the best solo canoeists in Canada. He is also the founder of the Domino Project and author of Poke the Box.



Compared to what? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/compared-to-what.html>)

January 30, 2011

It's not unusual for a book publisher to look at Kindle books and get nervous about the pricing. After all, if it's the same words, available just as soon as the hardcover, why should it cost half as much (or less?)

Eighty years ago, if you wanted to read a book, your choice was a hardcover. The price was the price. All hardcovers, all new books in a category, cost just about the same.

Decades later, paperbacks gave you an alternative, but the thing was, you had to wait a year for the book to come out in paperback. Bargain seeking readers could read older books, but *within* each format, there was parity.

The ebook presents a conundrum. They are cheaper than a hardcover for the same content. The real puzzle, though, has nothing to do with hardcovers, and this is what publishers are missing:

The competition for a Kindle book isn't the hardcover. The competition is a game on the iPad or a movie from Netflix or a song playing on your Sonos. Pricing is about substitutions, and if we want books to avoid becoming a tiny niche, we need to price accordingly. There are more substitutes, and they are cheaper than ever before.

An ebook might be faster to get and easier to carry around, but it doesn't offer the prestige or interior decorating benefits of a hardcover. We don't devalue the book when we price it lower as an ebook, because we're actually not selling the souvenir/lendable element we sell with the hardcover. *They're different products for different readers.*

The market is clearly willing to buy ebooks, and now our job is to price them in a way that makes them an irresistible habit.

Seth Godin is an author and the founder of the Domino Project.



In Search of a Domino Street Team (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/domino-street-team.html>)

January 24, 2011

Hey, I'm Amber Rae, the Domino Project's chief evangelist. Lovely to meet you.

Exciting news! The Domino Project is creating a worldwide street team. We're on a mission to create a domino effect around the world, spreading ideas to people who care. We're reinventing publishing, and that means we need a bunch of smart, vocal, passionate and connected people to help us do so.

How do you know if you're a good fit? You are: a digital native who blogs, tweets and instagrams like nobody's business. You take risks, challenge conventions, and care about reinventing outdated systems. You're inspired by great thinkers like Seth Godin and organizations like TED, and you love spreading ideas that matter. When you read a great book, you immediately want to share it with others. It changed your life and you want it to change other people's lives too. If that sounds like you, this is your opportunity.

In exchange for spreading the word, you'll get a first look at new books, a platform for hosting fun events and other exclusive offers.

We'll pick 50 or so people and the mission will last around six months, with the potential to go longer. We've never done this before, and though we certainly might fail, we'll definitely create impact.

Apply here (<https://bit.ly/TDPstreetteam>) by this Friday, January 28 at Noon ET. While we can't respond to everyone's submission, we'll connect with those who make the team by February 1. Good luck.

Amber Rae is The Domino Project's chief evangelist. You can find more of Amber at heyamberrae.com (<http://heyamberrae.com>) or on Twitter @heyamberrae (<https://twitter.com/heyamberrae>).



Why wasn't I told? (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/why-wasnt-i-told.html>)

January 22, 2011

This is the heart of the issue. When a movie is important, or resonates in our community, we hear of it. We might even go to see it. We certainly get sent a link about it or engage in a discussion. That's partly because movies have broader audiences and partly because they're easier to share and partly because they only make 400 biggish movies a year.

In 1976, Richard Dawkins published *The Selfish Gene* (<https://www.amazon.com/Selfish-Gene-Anniversary---Introduction/dp/0199291152/permissionmarket>). If I had been informed, I would have read it the year it came out, for sure. If I had known about it in college, I would have read it, most certainly. But I didn't discover it until I was researching *Unleashing the Ideavirus* (<http://www.ideavirus.com>), almost a quarter of a century later...

How is it possible that I lived for twenty-five years as an intelligent person interested in these topics and no one told me?

Actually, with 170,000 books published a year, how is it possible that anyone finds *any* book?

Since the real heyday of books as a cultural force, what we've seen is one medium after another getting better at spreading through the culture. And they're leaving books behind. The challenge, then, is to re-organize the way books can interact so they have a fighting chance... a way to combine the innate power of the printed word with the viral power of the web.

This is the rubicon that book publishing must cross to survive. Books appear to be designed to be difficult to spread, completely in opposition to every other form of media, each of which are tuned and organized to benefit from significant word of mouth.

Sure, Amy Chua has shown up in the Times (<https://query.nytimes.com/search/sitesearch?query=%22amy+chua%22&srchst=cse>) a hundred times in the last three weeks. But unless we're going to publish nothing but self-destructive books by Yale law professors, the world needs a better approach.

Imagine a scenario in which a major movie with a star you care about comes and goes and you don't hear about it... not likely. Books will never be movies, because they are micro, not mass. But the challenge (and the opportunity) is to reach the people who care, and to do it far more effectively, offering them books worth talking about.



Performance anxiety (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/performance-anxiety.html>)

January 19, 2011

What to publish? How much to publish? Should a successful artist paint another painting, should a beloved musician record another record?

This is the dilemma of every publisher (and in the digital world, that means all of us). On one side lies logorrhea, too many words, too much published. On the other lies fear—fear of wearing out a welcome, fear of not meeting expectations, fear of failure. The safest thing to do is nothing.

Harry Potter was rejected by more than a dozen publishers. So was Stephen King's first novel. Same for *A Confederacy of Dunces*. How many books that were never published have you had a chance to read, to love, to share and to be changed by?

Ted Williams or Babe Ruth? The Babe struck out a lot. That's what comes from swinging for the fences. If the cost of striking out is low, and the reward to the reader and the publisher of getting it right is high, then giving the author that chance makes sense to me.

Which blog posts should I have skipped writing? Which books were a mistake? I know that my answer after the fact is always different than it was before I decided to publish. The market, it seems, is a better judge of what matters than I am.

I know what quality is when it comes to making a pacemaker or a tablet of Tylenol. I'm not sure, though, that six sigma perfection can ever be the goal of a successful publisher. Going to the edges and publishing work worth a conversation will always be in conflict with the idea of getting it perfect.



Strategy memo: Rejecting the New York Times bestseller list (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/rejecting-the-new-york-times-bestseller-list.html>)

January 14, 2011

Every now and then, I'd like to share some of the strategic discussions we've had and decisions we've made as we've created this project.

The first one may surprise you. We needed to decide if we cared about having our books make the bestseller list. If you publish books (or write them) aimed at a mass audience, the *Times* list is never very far from your focus. It's not just an indicator (the proverbial canary, indicating what's going on in the mine) but it's also an amplifier, a spark that can lead to ever more sales, conversations and credibility.

The list became truly important a few decades ago when the superstores started discounting bestsellers to near cost. That meant that if a book made the list it would certainly cost a lot less and be displayed far more prominently. Which of course kept it on the list for weeks or months. While this effect has faded, the prestige and attention that the list brings has only grown.

But there's a cost. The cost is that you have to write differently, promote differently and do business differently. Simple questions about rollout, promotion, pricing, packaging, titles and distribution sooner or later come down to, "will it hurt us on the list?"

The curious know that there are in fact two lists for non-fiction hardcover books. The first list, the regular list, is the list of 'real' books of the sort the *Times* (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2007/10/the-new-york-ti.html) would like people to read. The second list is a ghetto, a place for How To, Advice, and the always coveted 'Miscellaneous' books to reside. This list was invented by the editors at the *Times* because these books were crowding out the other, *better*, books from the list.

Of course, it's always tricky to draw lines. So my friends Dan Pink and Malcolm Gladwell's important books end up on the *real* list while folks like Jessica Seinfeld and the Heath brothers have to fight their way onto the other, better selling and more crowded but somewhat lesser list.

Careful which title you pick, because it'll change where you end up.

It turns out that where your book is sold makes a difference as well. The *Times* is notorious for counting sales at certain stores (usually independent booksellers) more than others, and until recently ignoring some stores altogether.

Selling books at a conference? Well, if you get them straight from the publisher you can offer them at a lower price, serving your readers better. Of course, those sales won't count for the list. Instead, contact a bookstore, route the sales through them (though they never touch the books) and you'll get credit for the list.

Want to sell a five pack of your books? You can't easily do that if you care about the list, because the *Times* counts each pack as one book, not five.

It goes on and on. I'm not sure it's worth it any more.

Readers have plenty of other lists (online and off) if we're curious what's popular. Smart people are realizing the list is easily gamed, and word of mouth ends up being more important anyway. The same thing happened to the Billboard charts once Top 40 radio faded in importance. New ways of selling (ebooks, multipacks, etc.) are more important than a label from a newspaper that knows it is publishing a list that isn't accurate.

So we're ignoring the *Times* with our books. Not worth the journey. We'll take care of our readers first and let the bestseller list take care of itself.



January update for the Domino Project (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2011/01/january-update-for-the-domino-project.html>)

January 8, 2011

Hope you enjoyed the holiday break. We've been busy...

The first manifesto is finished, copyedited, typeset and at the printer. I've been involved in literally hundreds of books, but there's nothing quite like the feeling you get when you see the finished pages for the first time.

There are another half dozen or so titles in varying stages of development, I'll share more as they get closer to reality.

Last week, half a dozen extraordinary people (I'm calling them the Dominoes) joined me on the team. That has led to a never-ending spate of brainstorming, bar raising and general bonhomie. Bonhomie is underrated.

I was surprised at how powerful it was to add a group of people to the team on the same day. Projects usually grow piecemeal, one person at a time. When half a dozen people join at once you get a chance to reset expectations and assumptions. I've found it challenging and incredibly productive.

Look for more details in the weeks to come. In the meantime, our FAQ (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/frequently-asked-questions>) will continue to be updated.



If you can't read this, something's not right (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2010/12/if-you-cant-read-this-somethings-not-right.html>)

December 12, 2010

We've signed up quite a few people for this newsletter, but if we missed you, here's your chance to fix it. A big launch brings excitement but electronic hassles as well. Sorry if we didn't get it right the first time.

You can follow this newsletter on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/ProjectDomino>), via RSS (<https://feeds.feedburner.com/TheDominoProject>) or by email subscription (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//subscribe-to-this-newsletter>).

More news as it happens, probably early in the year. One focus of our effort is to take extraordinarily good care of the attention of our core readers, and I'll work hard not to waste it.

Have a great holiday season.



The Domino Project launches early next year (<https://www.thedominoproject.com/2010/11/second-post.html>)

November 24, 2010

It's no secret that publishing is changing. After five hundred years, the act of making, selling, reading and sharing books is evolving. Ten years from now, it will be (for the first time) unrecognizable to Gutenberg. My expanded thoughts on this are on my blog (http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2010/12/the-domino-project.html) today.

We can't promise everything we do will work—in fact, I'm sure it won't—but I'm confident that it will be interesting. Please **subscribe (<https://www.thedominoproject.com//subscribe-to-this-newsletter>)** if you can, so we can keep you up to date, send you free stuff and let you in first on limited editions. Thanks.

PS Amazon has a page (https://www.amazon.com/Domino-Project-Book-1/dp/193559768X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1291818085&sr=1-1) about the project now.



Our latest manifesto



(<https://www.amazon.com/The-Flinch->

[ebook/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0062Q7S3S/ref=sr_1_4?s=digital-text&ie=UTF8&qid=1323208767&sr=1-4))

What is The Domino Project?

The Domino Project is named after the domino effect—one powerful idea spreads down the line, pushing from person to person. Learn more → ([/about](#))

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