CREATORS
COMPANION

VOL 1

SUBTLEARTOFNOTYELLING.COM
THEBOXWORKSHOP.COM

WRITTEN BY BILL SMALL &
MILES HANSON

12 CREATIVE RULES, REMINDERS & GUIDELINES

TO KEEP YOU FROM LOSING YOUR MIND OR GIVING UP

1. PERFECT IS BORING
2. THE CURSE OF EVERYTHING
3. SHOW UP
4. ELIMINATE OBSCURITY
5. IT'S NOT ART IF NOBODY SEES IT
6. JEALOUSY, AN OPPORTUNITY
7. UNSEEN WORK
8. STAY OUT OF THE DARK PLAYGROUND
9. HAVE A COACH
10. KNOW YOUR WORTH AND HOW TO PRICE STUFF
11. HAVE A DAILY PRACTICE
12. NOBODY ACTUALLY KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON...

ONE

PERFECT IS BORING

If perfect was the way, we wouldn't be able to enjoy the works of Prince, Vincent van Gogh, Massimiliano Pelletti, Frida Kahlo, Queen, and pretty much any great artist that ever existed.

Many of the songs you hear today came out of a mistake. Mistakes and imperfections are not flaws, but instead part of the process.

One of the most beloved and famous bands of all time, The Grateful Dead, perfmored a different show every time. They'd "jam" together and improvise their songs, a far from perfect performance.

As creatives, the earlier we give up our useless pursuit of perfection, the quicker we will create great work for the world and build a true following, community, and business.

How many amazing things cease to exist today all because someone wanted it to be "perfect."

Let's face it, perfect is boring, imperfection is interesting.

TWO

THE CURSE OF EVERYTHING

If you do everything, you'll do nothing well. If you're online, you'll see (at one point or another) a strong and convincing argument for every single thing.

Let's take marketing for example; someone will tell you that TikTok will get you the most growth. Someone else will say IG is the best place to grow a community, or that LinkedIn is best for b2b.

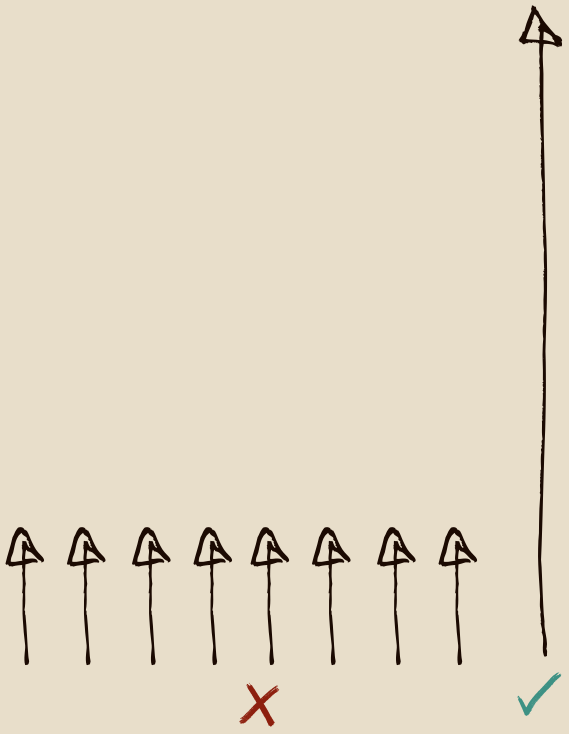
Yet another source will say that email has the highest ROI. What many people will do (especially the creative type) is attempt to be on too many platforms at once. The hope is that you'll be seen by MORE people and have MORE reach if you're on multiple platforms.

But the trick is that we don't want reach at first...we want resonance.

Reach comes later. You'd rather resonate and build a relationship with a small audience than briefly hold the attention of a large audience.

The problem is, growing a real, engaged audience or community is not easy. It takes time, energy, and commitment. That's why not everyone can do it. You'll likely get it wrong at first and have to start over. **But you'll never get there by trying to do it all.**

The same thing applies to any area of your business and life. **Pick one thing to focus on, do it well,** and for a long time (long enough to know if it works), that's how you'll make progress.



THREE

SHOW UP

Small consistent actions over time make lasting change. Have you ever tried to start something new that you think will be good for you? An exercise routine? A meditation practice?

You make some kind of declaration, “I’m gonna meditate everyday!” and then 3 days in, your kid wakes up with a fever, or you get a flat tire, or you just plain don’t feel like doing it. Yeah, me too.

It seems like if you don’t do it 100%, or exactly the way it looked in your mind, or the way someone in a book or on Instagram does it, that there’s no point in continuing. It’s not going to work. You’re just too lazy.

The thing is, while massive action and strict discipline can certainly produce results, for most people, that way of approaching things isn’t sustainable.

The benefits of things like exercise and meditation show up over time. Even if you only show up once a week, over time it will make a difference.

The same is true in business. You don’t achieve lasting success overnight. That’s a myth. You show up. Consistently. Over and over again.

FOUR

ELIMINATE OBSCURITY

If you're building something for the world, obscurity is one of the biggest challenges standing in your way. Obscurity is "a thing that is unclear or difficult to understand." It's "the state of being unknown, inconspicuous, or unimportant."

So how do we eliminate it? First, understand it. So many creatives put stuff out into the world too early or without actually understanding it themselves.

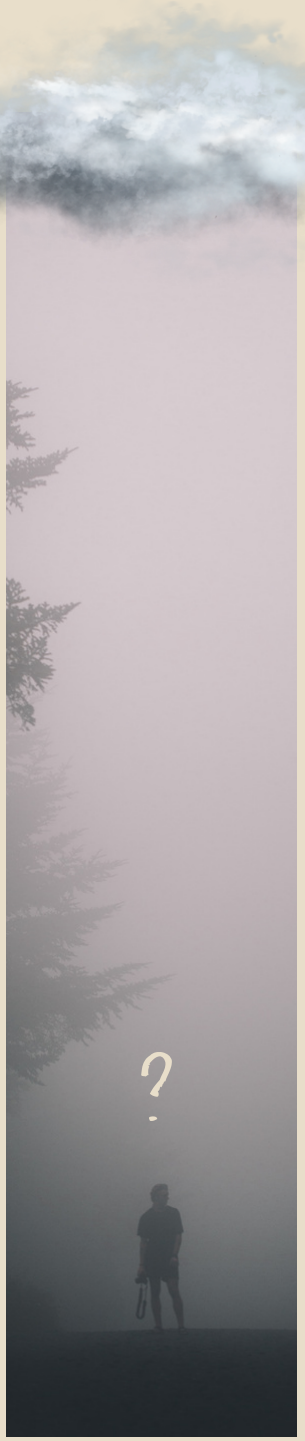
It's our job as creatives and entrepreneurs to understand the anatomy of our work, the problem that it solves, the person it helps, and the thoughts that circle around it.

When you put something out in the world, you're immediately competing with millions of other variables. The way to resonate with your people is to understand them and speak directly to them.

Eliminate vague, uninspiring language. **Eliminate crowded and overwhelming design.** Focus on one point or one call to action at a time.

When you understand what you're making, why, and for who, you'll be able to communicate clearly, as a result, so will others. This is how it will grow beyond you. Have your clients, customers, partners, and friends go through your stuff and find obscurity. Then eliminate it.

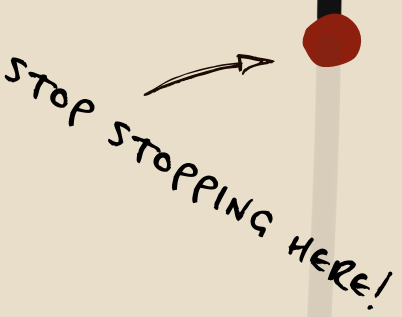
Eliminate Obscurity for yourself and the end user.



FIVE

IT'S NOT ART IF NOBODY SEES IT

Making the thing is **50% of the process**. If you have a business (not a hobby) you need to share your work consistently. If you're a creative, you likely aren't great at selling and promoting your work.
That ends now.



Share that sh*t. Get comfortable with it.
Get the reps in. **If you want to make more stuff, you'll need space.**

If you want space, you'll need some money. **You can't make money without sales and you can't make sales without telling people about your work.**

Think of social media (or whatever strategy you use) as part of the art. It doesn't end once the art is made, it ends once the art is sold.

Don't be so proud that you expect people to go digging for your work. Don't be better than marketing (social media, email, word of mouth etc). It's all part of the game and it's fun once you get some momentum.

It's not art if no one sees it. It's not a business if no one buys it. You work hard to make things, don't let that energy go to waste.

SIX

JEALOUSY, AN OPPORTUNITY

The contraction that comes from jealousy is unlike any other. And it's compounded by the fact that we sometimes even wish defeat and failure upon others. Sometimes it's the people closest to us. Then....the gigantic shame wave pours over us, drowning us in self-pity and stagnation. Ahhh!!!

But here's the "secret." Jealousy is a little notification from the creative gods. It's a message about what you want, but it's buried deep in the abyss of delusional comparison, a blurry goal, or a lack of self worth.

When jealousy (the Green Monster) comes along...

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- **Feel** the jealousy and let it move through you. It's just temporary energy.
- Wish them well. Turn that energy into recognition and appreciation. Celebrate them, and energetically thank them for the inspiration.
- Ask yourself, what is it that I think they have that I think I want. Make a list (journaling is great for this).
- Go back to your vision. What do I actually want? What's your vision for the future? And if you're not sure, get clear. Call a friend and talk it out. Maybe even hire a coach to help you get clear on that. When your vision is clear, jealousy won't have as much power over you.
- Be grateful. Remember that you're 10x better and 10x worse at your craft than others and it doesn't matter. But you probably forgot how much you've actually done to get here. It's pretty incredible. We tend to discredit everything we've done when jealousy creeps in. Go look at your work and the value you've shared with the world.

SEVEN

UNSEEN WORK

This one comes from our good friend Myles Biggs.
Here's your question:

ARE YOU DOING THE UNSEEN WORK SO THAT WHEN YOU ARE FINALLY SEEN, YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SHOW FOR IT?

You see, 99% of your work happens when no one is watching. To take a level deeper, a lot of your unseen work happened before you were even born.

Myles calls this **Generational Unseen Work**. The work of your parents and ancestors to give you what you have right out of the gate. Understanding this will help you understand yourself and your work.

Passive unseen work is the important work we do without knowing exactly where it will take us.

Active unseen work is the important work we do with the goal in mind.

Be okay with no one knowing or seeing you work. The unseen work you do will dictate future generations and the unseen work they will be able to do. **Do it for your future self and for future generations**.

ACTIVE // PASSIVE // GENERATIONAL

EIGHT

STAY OUT OF THE DARK PLAYGROUND

How often do you start a day with the intention to “get it all done” or “catch up on everything? Some days, you get a lot done and it feels really good! Momentum! Other days, you go down a vicious cycle of procrastination and guilt.

So how do we find a creative and productive flow that ping pongs back and forth between focused work and guilt-free play?

Tim Urban came up with **“The Dark Playground,”** which he defines as:

A place every procrastinator knows well. It’s a place where leisure activities happen at times when leisure activities are not supposed to be happening.

The fun you have in the Dark Playground isn’t actually fun because it’s completely unearned and the air is filled with guilt, anxiety, self-hatred, and dread.

Sometimes the Rational Decision-Maker puts his foot down and refuses to let you waste time doing normal leisure things, and since the Instant Gratification Monkey sure as hell isn’t gonna let you work, you find yourself in a bizarre purgatory of weird activities where everyone loses.

As a creative, you’ll likely end up here every now and then, **but here are a few things you can do to avoid it as much as possible:**

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- **Commit** to a realistic and sustainable schedule and routine
- Work on the **big thing first**. The thing that requires the most energy.
- Take **breaks** and go outside
- Create a “second brain,” a place where all your to-do's, tasks, projects, and ideas can live so they don’t take up brain space when you are playing.
- Give yourself a reward

NINE

HAVE A COACH

What is a coach and why do I need one? Simple, you don't know what you don't know. When I was a kid, I was on a swim team. The object of the sport is to go faster than everyone else and win the race. To do that, I had to have good form.

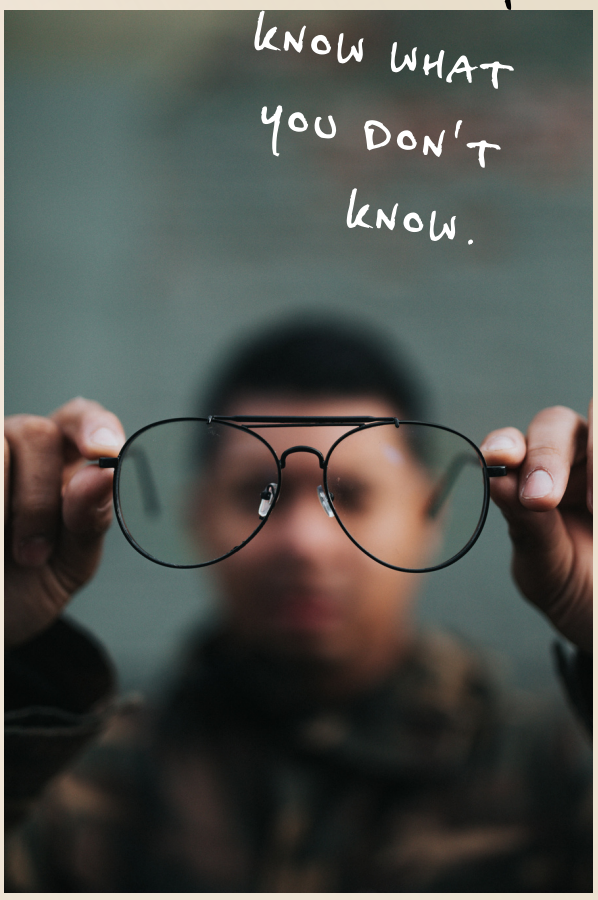
I couldn't see my body swimming in the water, but my coach could. She could see the adjustments I could make that would make me go faster. It's the same in business. (and life)

A good coach can help you navigate the obstacles that any business encounters, including the ones you put in your own way.

Having a coach can be like having a business partner that doesn't own a part of your business.

Taking a stand for you Part trusted advisor, part accountability partner, and someone who is committed to YOUR success.

having the life and the business that you want. That's powerful stuff.



TEN

KNOW YOUR WORTH AND HOW TO PRICE STUFF

What are you worth? Have you ever had to put a price on a service you offer or a product or piece of art that you've created? It ain't easy. At some point, most people grossly undercharge for what they make or what they do. Why is that? Well, how do you put a price on yourself? That's what we end up doing.

We get ourselves all wrapped up with whatever it is we're selling, and can't separate the "me" from the "thing." We also tend to think things like, "I wouldn't pay that much for it!" So, what's the solution?

It's always a good idea to get a sense of the market for what you sell. Whether it's a service or a thing, somebody out there is selling something similar and people are buying it. It's not about making direct comparisons, that's a slippery slope, but more about the broader market for whatever it is you sell.

For example, most people expect to pay $15 (maybe $20) for a CD when they go see an artist play a show. That can give you a place to start with pricing.

Maybe you have an EP with only 3 songs on it, so you charge a little less, or you made a limited edition of some sort, so you charge a little more. You get the idea?

When pricing a service, knowing the market can be important, but knowing your customer and yourself are equally so. If you have a service, you may have some idea (I hope) of the time it takes you to provide that service.

You may also see that there are only so many hours to play with, so you can only perform this service so many times per week, month, etc. If you then have some idea of how much money you need to make, you can do a little math and come up with a starting price.

Here's the bottom line: You are not your product, and you are not your customer. Even when you are selling art and feel like you put your whole self into it, it's still not you. And, you are not your customer.

There are people out there who have all the necessary resources to compensate you handsomely for whatever it is you do. **They just need to know that it has value. So, don't be cheap. Raise your prices. Even by a little. See what happens.**

ELEVEN

HAVE A DAILY PRACTICE

Do something daily, get better at it, even on the days you don't want to.

> "THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A BAD WRITER. THERE ARE SIMPLY PEOPLE WHO PRACTICE, AND PEOPLE WHO DON'T." – @MARGOAARON

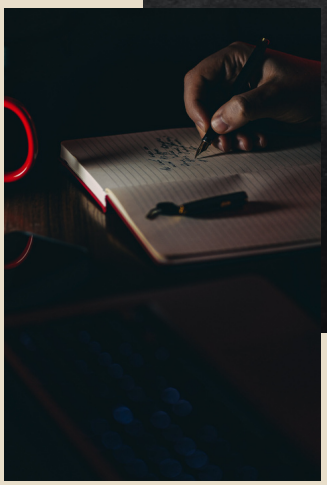
If you're tying your actions to a specific outcome, it's like playing a basketball game while staring at the scoreboard.

Instead, focus on showing up to practice every day, putting in the reps, training and preparing.

Let's take a daily writing habit as an example. Are you writing to get tons of readers or one day write a book? Or are you showing up daily simply to work on the craft?

Have a north star and a purpose, but don't stare at the scoreboard. Let go of the outcomes and stay present to the practice.

You'll be surprised what comes out of this...



TWELVE

NOBODY ACTUALLY KNOWS WHAT'S GOING ON...

No matter how together they seem. No matter how fantastic their life looks on Instagram, or how many books about their unicorn success they sold, no one, and I mean NO ONE, knows what the F%#k is going on.

On some level we are all just trying to get through the day, and some days we're ALL just hanging on for dear life.

Now, it's nice to believe that at some point we may finally feel like we have it together. That we're in the know. That we're reached some level of divine perfection in our work and life. (And, some folks are good at making it all look pretty and easy.)

But... here's the reality: No one knows anything, and that's the beauty of it. The paradox is that once you realize no one knows what the f*ck is going on, you now know exactly what is going on.

So, give yourself a break and have some fun.

INSPIRED AND SUPPORTED BY OUR WONDERFUL (YEAR ONE) PODCASTS GUESTS

JASON MOSS
JANA POCHOP
LIZ WILCOX
JARED JUDGE
MATT ANDERSON
RYAN ESTES
MYLES BIGGS
TOKU MCCREE
JAMES GHAREEB
JORDAN MITCHELL
SUSAN GIBSON
STACY FISCHER
EVAN SHANK
JOSH PRUITT
DARDEN SMITH
DR. MICHELLE MAZUR
DYLAN SCHMIDT
GILL ANDREWS

THANK YOU

CO-WRITTEN BY BILL SMALL

WWW.ARTISTMIND.CO

COACH // MUSICIAN

CO-WRITTEN AND DESIGNED BY MILES HANSON

WWW.BRANDTHRIVE.CO

BRAND DESIGNER // MUSICIAN

FONT BY JAMES MARTIN (MADE BY JAMES)

WWW.THEMADEBYJAMES.COM

(ONE OF OUR YEAR 2 GUESTS)

DEDICATED TO MIDAS

A WONDERFUL, SMILING DOG THAT BROUGHT TONS OF JOY TO THIS WORLD.

(YEAR ONE GUEST APPEARANCE)

THANKS FOR READING

SAVE THIS AND USE IT WHEN YOU'RE STUCK

LISTEN TO THE POD

THE SUBTLE ART OF NOT YELLING PODCAST (LINK)

FINISH WHAT YOU START

JOIN THE BOX (LINK)

KEEP CREATING