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PART 1



TICK TOCK

“What is past is
prologue.”

William Shakespeare

“Eyes front!”

Any drill sergeant in any
army anywhere

Life has a sting in the tail.



It's shorter than we expect.

And it races by while we're working out what's really important and what actually isn't.

As time roars past our ears we drift, deliberate, doubt and take ourselves too seriously yet all the while we talk about what we would, could and should do to make it better.

And then it's gone.

So let's walk the talk.

Because there's never been a better time, or a more urgent time, to start doing the things you want to do.

Let's dance.

The speed of life

This book is about starting.

It's about shifting from the static to the active state; the state where things happen because you initiated them.

It's about shifting gears, moving direction, transforming what you do with your day, your week, your time and taking control; it's about deliberately putting one foot in front of the other and moving with purpose instead of being carried along by the current.

There's never been a better time to start something. Now more than ever we live in a world of opportunity.

But the downside to this world of opportunity – brought about by new technology and new social and working conventions – is a world that seduces us into drifting through life.

Things like: shopping, web-surfing, casual tweeting, photo-commenting and status-updating. It's not that these things aren't fun or even good. But while it might feel like you're "doing" – in large part thanks to the power of billions of dollars of marketing – you might have a feeling that there's got to be more to life.

Take a couple of years out

Supposing you could take the next 2 years off from your normal life? You didn't have to worry about where you live, earning a living, paying the bills, what family, friends and colleagues would think of what you do in those next 24 months.

Now, what are you going to do in this time? Shop, surf the web and update your status? Maybe you'll spend your time sitting on a beach talking about what you're going to do over the next few months? Or will you be itching to get on with what you've been thinking about and talking about?

- What then, after a few weeks sitting on a beach, would you like to be getting on with?
- Do you want to write a book, start a band, study, renovate your house, leave your partner, your job, the town you live in and travel far and wide?
- What's it going to be? What do you want to do? Get a pen and paper and write it down. Now.
- Write down the things you'd do and the things, people and places it would involve. If it involves more money than you currently have, you're granted a limitless fund for anything you want to do.
- The money is there so that there's no financial barrier to you doing what you've often talked about.
- Find an image from a magazine (or download one from online and print off), something that depicts what it is you really want to do.

**“Only put off
until tomorrow
what you are
willing to die
having left
undone.”**

Pablo Picasso

You might have an itch.

Life is short.

If you've got something you want to do...
now is a good time to start.

Here are four reasons why...



The **FIRST**
reason to start
something now...

YOU CAN

The wheels are greased.

Our connected world makes it possible for people to actualize dreams, ideas and initiative in ways our forebears could not even dream of.

1.

Whatever you want to know is accessible instantly.

Want to collect fountain pens from around the world, want to learn how to collect truffles, want to find someone to build a mobile phone app for you in another continent, want to retrain, want to research how to bicycle across the world...? No problem. It's all at your fingertips.

Try it now.

Put a couple of these into a search engine and see what comes up.

How to collect fountain pens from around the world

How to collect truffles

Mobile phone app builders in India and China

How to cycle across the world.



2.

Need to locate expert help?

Then connect with people who can help you. The soaring development of the social web has demolished barriers between you and the expertise you need. It empowers you to ask friends of friends (and friends of friends of friends) if they can offer advice, make introductions, share experiences.



Try it now.

Who do you know who's already doing or has done what you want to do? Get in touch with them. Ask to meet them, talk on the phone or email them and find out how they did it. What are their top tips?

3. Tribe up.

Whatever it is you want to start doing – a business, a work of art, a social project, setting up a partnership of website information architects – there are people somewhere in the world who share your passion.

Want to find people to trade antique fountain pens with? There are thousands of them. It doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to find people who share your passion. You can support each other, learn from each other, do business with each other. The author Seth Godin² calls these groups of shared passions: "Tribes."

Try it now.

Here's a few ideas to find your tribe:

Meetup (www.meetup.com) – an online networking site that facilitates offline group meetings in various localities around the world. You can find and join groups unified by a common interest.

Facebook groups – these provide a dedicated space for people to communicate their shared interests, so a great way to find and connect with like-minded sets of people.

Peoplehunt – an app which connects individuals with reciprocal interests. For example, you can find someone to practise another language with, or give you guidance about online marketing.

4.

The “barriers to entry” have collapsed.

OK, so that’s a business term and we’re not just talking about business. But the point is that the cost of setting up many businesses or even non-business projects has collapsed. Most digital start-ups don’t even need an office but work from shared space or coffee shops. This has, for example, had an impact on the venture capital world. The power used to be in the hands of the VCs because you needed money to set up a business and they would exact a heavy price for the cash. Now that it doesn’t cost so much to start up, the power is with people who have ideas and the “gumption” to make them happen.

Viva la Revolución!

Viva gumption!

5.

You’re already at the centre of the universe.

And if in fact you are starting a business or collecting fountain pens from around the world, the global markets are wide open for business. From your front room.

The fat is
in the pan.
Get cooking.





The **SECOND**
reason to start
something now...

**Unconventional is
Conventional**

The boat is being rocked.

The conventions of society that dictated the correct way to behave and whose arched eyebrows used to hold people's dreams in check are vanishing. In the big cities they're already long gone. The world is too connected for that and it moves too fast.



1. Sixty years ago a gentleman wouldn't go to work without a hat on; ten years ago they stopped wearing ties. Now you don't have to go to work to go to work... so who knows what people are wearing. But the point is: who cares?!

Society cares less about conformity than it used to. This makes it easier to swim against the current. Easier to do something different, to challenge convention. If you want to give up your job and travel round the world, learn to juggle, join a commune - your neighbours might cough and shake their heads but you can cope with that...Or they might just tell you how they always wanted to do the same thing.

2. The concept of a job for life is long gone. The tramlines that used to confine a career from start to finish; from apprenticeship to grave aren't imposed by anyone but you. It's not unusual to hold down three part-time jobs at once or to shift jobs every couple of years. In response to the absence of job security we have had to become more agile in our approach to work. Self-employment is soaring.

3. You are going to live a long time. Life expectancy goes up and up. If you're going to be around a long time you might as well do something you enjoy for as much of that time as possible.

Pimp your ride.

The boat is *already* being rocked.

Some examples of how lifestyle, work, society and leisure are changing.

The most entrepreneurial country in the West is built on failure

The net number of U.S. startups versus closures is minus 70,000.

(Source: US Census Bureau, Longitudinal Business Database)

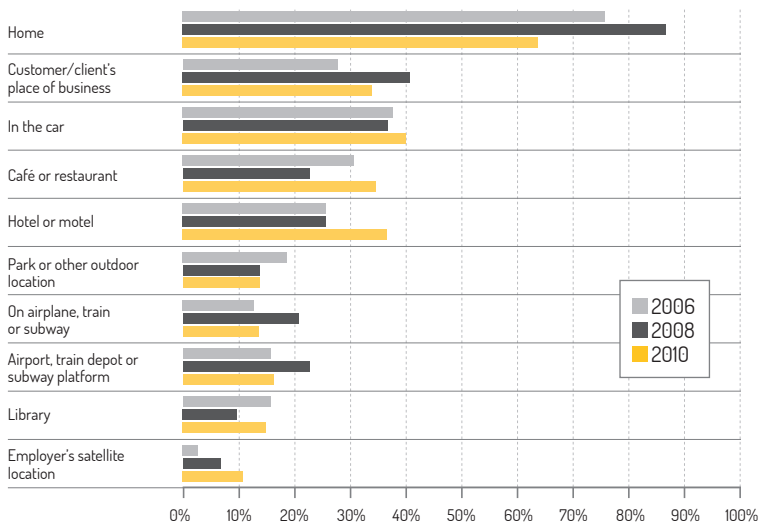
Folk managing themselves and themselves alone

There are over 22 million non-employer businesses. Meaning they have no boss and they have no staff underneath them.

They just get up and do.

(Source: US Census Bureau)

Locations where work was conducted during the past month



(Source: *Telework 2011* by World at Work using data collected by the Dierenger Research Group Inc and World at Work)

Folk escaping the cubicle on a daily basis

3.7 million employees (2.5% of the workforce) now work from home at least half the time.

(Source: Based on an analysis of 2005-2014 American Community Survey (US Census Bureau) data conducted by GlobalWorkplaceAnalytic.com)

Folk escaping the cubicle for a long time

Of the 2014 FORTUNE 100 Best Companies, 72% offer sabbaticals.

(Source: Rohman, Jessica, "How great workplaces support work-life balance", 19 May 2014, www.greatplacetowork.com)

Lots of people share the same starting line

It's estimated that one in every eight workers in the United States has at some point been employed by McDonald's.

(Source: New York Times)

...And lots of people don't: being different is becoming the new norm

In 2013, 12.5% of the UK population was born outside the UK. That's up from 8.6% in 2003.

(Source: The Migration Observatory www.migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk)

Small businesses are everywhere

There were 5 million micro-businesses (those with less than 10 staff) in the UK in 2014, accounting for 96% of all businesses.

(Source: BIS, Business Population Estimates 2014)

You will live longer

So do something you enjoy.

	Male	Female
1930	58.1	61.6
1940	60.8	65.2
1950	65.6	71.1
1960	66.6	73.1
1970	67.1	74.7
1980	70.0	77.4
1990	71.8	78.8
2000	74.3	79.7
2007	75.4	80.4
2010	76.2	81.0

Life expectancy in the United States

(Source: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics Reports, vol. 54, no. 19, June 28, 2006 and Vol. 63, No. 7, November 6, 2014. Web: www.cdc.gov/nchs)

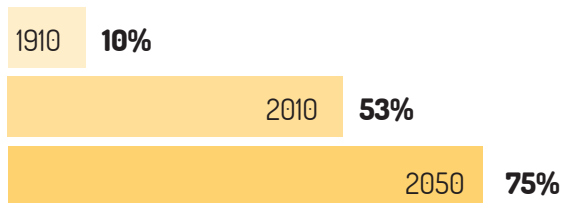
And there's a lot of us around

About 6.5% of all the people who have ever lived are alive today.

(Source: Carl Haub, "How many people have ever lived on Earth?" Population Reference Bureau)

The dominant habitat of the global species is the city

Percentage of population living in cities:



(Source: London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society: *The Endless City*)

And yet people want to escape the concrete habitat and farm their own food...(but sometimes they have to wait)

The average time on a waiting list for an allotment in Britain: 3 years. In parts of London the wait is 10 years.

According to one survey, the London Borough of Camden has a waiting list of 40 years.

(Source: Survey by LV Insurance 2009 quoted in "Allotment waiting lists: a barometer of our times," David Derbyshire, February 15th, 2011. <http://allotmentblog.dailymail.co.uk>)

Power is shifting East

At the end of 2004, there were 6,704 buildings over 11 stories built since 1990. In 2011, that grew to over 20,000 buildings.

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tallest_buildings_in_Shanghai)

You've no excuse not to find your tribe!

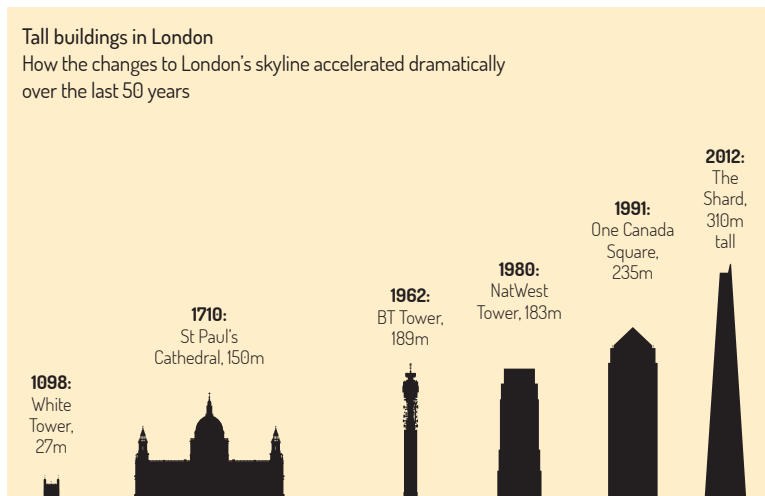
Take MeetUp, for example. This online network of social groups makes it easy for people to connect with others who share the same interests. They meet online and offline.

Number of meetings per month: 570,895

Number of monthly RSVPs: 3.93 million

Countries holding meet ups: 180

(Source: Meetup, 2015)



(Source: Data obtained from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_tallest_buildings_and_structures_in_London)

You're not who you were

It takes seven to ten years for the human body to renew every single cell. Your body is younger than you are. Whose issues are holding you back?!

Catch up



The **THIRD**
reason to start
something now...

**The Feeling
of Emptiness**

Is that all there is?

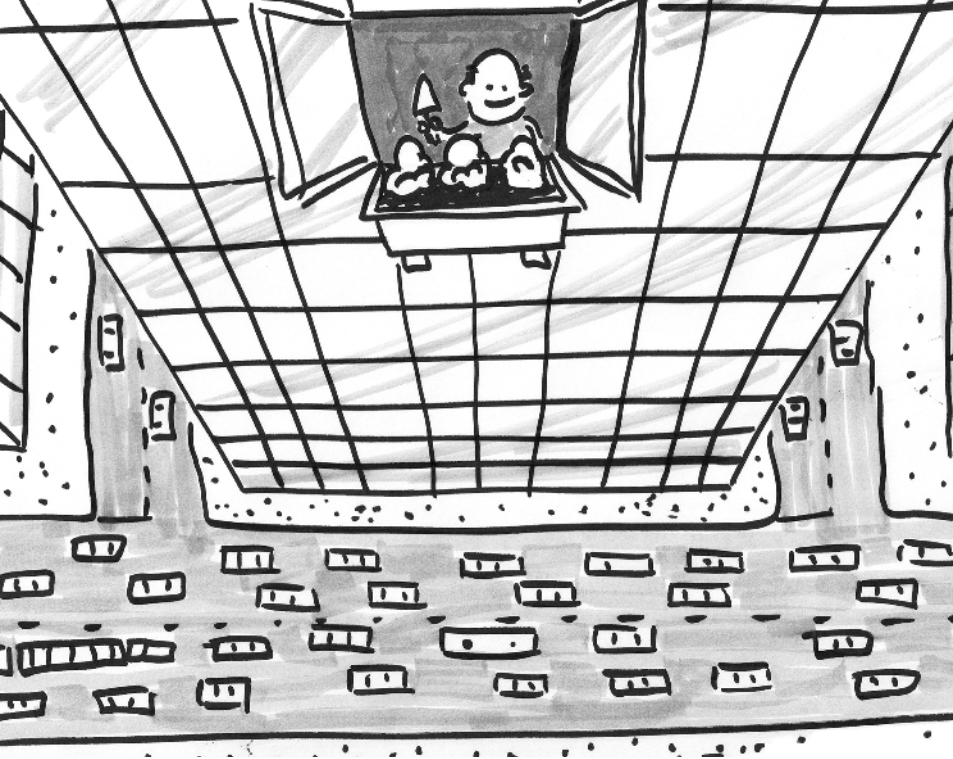
Indeed. Technology has brought the world to our fingertips and helped knock down the prison walls of convention but at the same time it also threatens to suck the meaning out of life. The antidote is to take the initiative; to start something yourself; something that has purpose. Here are some examples of the areas to watch out for:

- 1. The shop floor.** The meaningless grind of the factory production line has now seeped into the world of the white collar worker. As factory jobs moved from the West to the East the economies of the West have become dominated by so-called “knowledge workers”. The component parts of these jobs have been fragmented just like assembly line work and have had the satisfaction sucked out in just the same way. Rules and manuals govern every decision and reserve initiative and decision-making for the computer and the head office. You become emotionally disconnected from your job...You get an itch.
- 2. Long days.** The working day gets longer and longer. The macho pride in the length of the hours you work, in the end, means...what? You have less free time. So what are you going to DO with it?
- 3. The banks and the financial crisis.** The fruits of their labour, for an awful lot of people, was the ability to maximize their debt and buy the biggest house they could afford in the area they wanted to live. And then the market crashed. And your house price went “sayonara, baby”. Which was when you began to think to yourself: Is that all there is? Where’s my job satisfaction if it isn’t in the mortgage? What would I rather be doing with my free time? With my money? How am I going to change things?

In response to the feeling of emptiness and a search for meaning we are witnessing the emergence of business entities created for reasons other than solely monetary profit. The writer Daniel Pink³ describes the movement as one of **Purpose Maximizers** – people and entities driven by things other than money:

- The open-source movement has created powerful and valuable businesses and organizations such as Wikipedia (the online encyclopedia), Mozilla Firefox (the web browser and email) and Linux (the operating system used by many large organizations). Such businesses work because thousands of people freely give their time and skills. These are being formalized as “for social-benefit” organizations as opposed to “for profit”.
- The US state of Vermont recently created a low profit limited liability corporation. This allowed economic entities to be created whose purpose was to create a modest profit, for sure, but primarily to create a social benefit. Look at it this way, company law generally requires businesses to be created with the purpose of maximizing profits for the benefit of shareholders. Now they can have a different purpose – enshrined in law.
- The Nobel Prize winning economist Muhammad Yunus⁴ has created the concept of social businesses. Rather than being “for profit” these are “non-loss” companies. They must be economically self-sustaining but are not created to make a profit for the founders but to provide some form of social good.

It's not that seeking profit is necessarily bad. Far from it. But this trend shows a growing appreciation of how people can be powerfully motivated and compensated by the intrinsic meaning of what they DO and not just by a financial bonus scheme.



Waiting for an urban plot of land to work on before you start waiting to leave the city and grow your own vegetables in your own garden?

Don't confine your dream to waiting.

Get your hands dirty.

Start.



The **FOURTH**
reason to start
something now...

**That Ticking
Sound...**

Tick

One thing technology hasn't changed.

You won't live forever.

You might live a bit longer but that's all the more reason to start pursuing the life you want, not just the one you've ended up with.

Another thing technology hasn't changed: clichés about the passage of time. The thing is, clichés and truisms stick around through the generations for a reason...

And the sands of time are running out even as you turn the page.



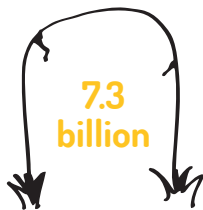
Let's get moving.

Tock

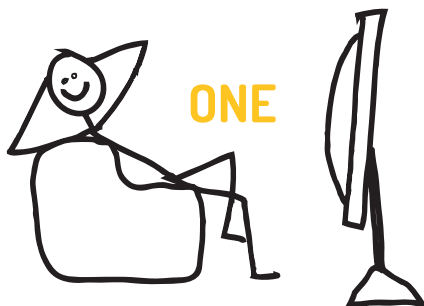
106 BILLION
LESSONS WHY
NOW IS THE
RIGHT TIME TO
START DOING...



The number of human beings estimated to have died in the whole history of the universe and everything. Ever.⁵



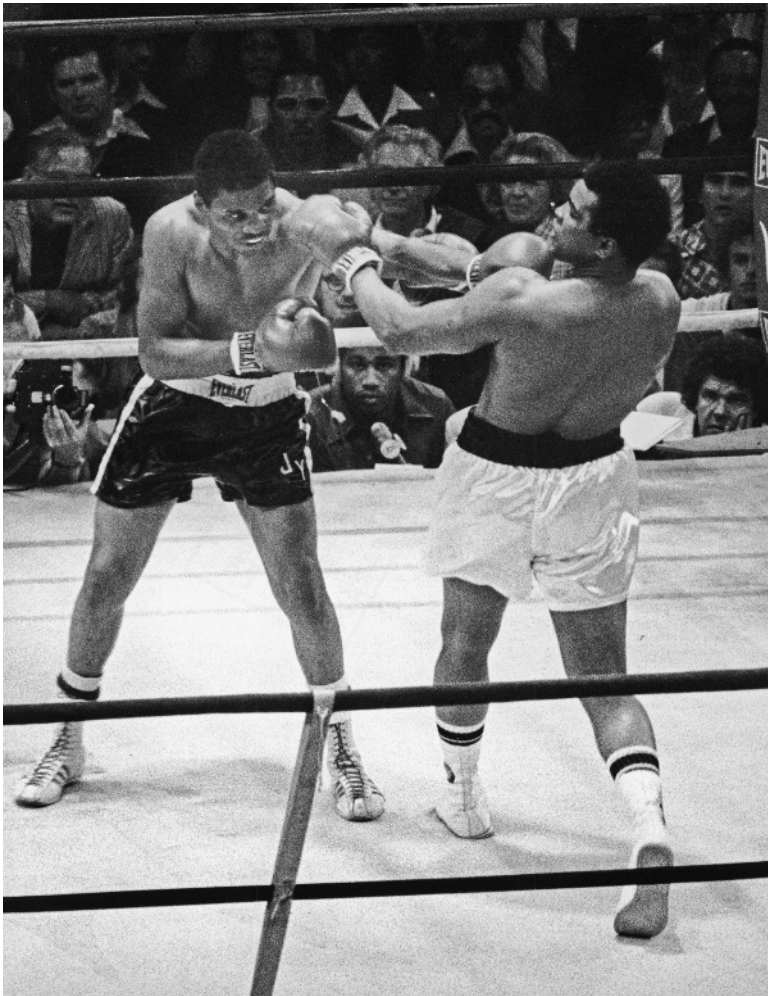
The total number of human beings alive today at the most populous time in the history of the whole world ever, Ever. So far.



The total number of chances to live your life that you get in the history of the world, the Universe and all the space time dimensions visited in all the episodes of *Star Trek* including spin-offs ever...before you are added to the 110 billion or so gravestones ever put into the ground by the time you kick the bucket.

Write down your thoughts about why NOW is the right time for you to start doing...

Question: Do you see yourself in this picture?



Inside the ropes, there are two guys fighting for their dreams.

Both dared mighty things and both have had great stories to tell.

And outside the ropes there are a thousand faces watching other people fight for their dreams.

The point?

You don't want to be an anonymous face in the crowd of your own life story.

That's a life of regret.

You gotta face your fears and climb inside the ropes.