

MAXIMIZE INFLUENCE

HOW SOME PEOPLE DELIVER
UNFORGETTABLE IMPACT

INFLUENCED



INFLUENCER

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Chapter 1: Paradigms

“Do not conform to the patterns in this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

– Paul of Tarsus

Unlearning Narcissism

August 22nd. 2012. It was Wednesday evening a little after 5PM. The leaves were just getting ready to change colors, not a cloud in the sky, the sun was shining brightly, and it felt like one-hundred degrees outside. I was by myself, waiting for my friend Jared Miller to arrive at our ministry house on 3rd Street in Louisville. Less than a mile from Churchill Downs.

At that moment, I found myself in the backyard staring down at a broken flash drive that was crushed into a thousand pieces...

With a hammer in my hand.

I remember it vividly. I remember almost everything from that month of my life. Nine days prior my Dad moved to heaven. He was out on a run at Strawtown Koteewi Park in Noblesville, Indiana. He had a massive heart attack and moved quickly from this life to the next. We never got to say goodbye to our best friend. That happened on Monday, August 13, 2012. He was 51 years young and we were devastated.

I returned to work on the following Monday and on Tuesday I had to go through a presentation training course where we delivered several different presentations, which were recorded on camera and stored on that (broken) flash drive. All while twelve people got to watch you. It was sobering.

Shaking nervously, both with my hands and my voice. Sweating. Red blotches all over my cheeks and my neck. On camera, I watched myself moving anxiously with no purpose. Nothing eloquent came out of my mouth for the entire day. I even remember messing up my name when I was introducing myself. It was truly that bad and I'm not embellishing this story. I hated every minute of the entire experience, and that was just the first day.

After day one, I went home and really worked hard to improve myself. I prepped. I planned. I practiced. I was prepared and committed to coming back that next day as a new man. Like an alcoholic who just drank his last drink, I was done with sucking at presentations.

The next day, I showed up enthusiastic and ready to go, and wouldn't you believe it? Day two was worse than day one. I remember being up at the podium and literally freezing in front of everyone. I didn't even finish that particular presentation nor did I watch the recording of it. I removed myself from the podium and walked out of the room quicker than the trainer could initiate a mandatory half-hearted clap for me.

I wasn't sad and I didn't cry. I spent most of the week prior in tears. At that moment in time, I was angry. And not about my Dad dying. I was mad because this may have been the first truly paradoxical experience in my life. It probably wasn't the first paradoxical moment of my life, but it was first time I can remember thinking that this doesn't make any sense.

Here's the backstory...Throughout my entire life, I was told to work hard and focus on improving myself. So I did, and it worked. If I wanted to improve at sports, I practiced harder, and sure enough I got better. If I wanted to get good grades, I just focused on improving myself, and I got better grades. You name it, and focusing on improving myself was the answer that always satisfied.

Until that smoking hot day in August of 2012. "Why do I suck at this?" I asked myself. I really wasn't even mad that I was horrible at presenting. I've been bad at a lot of things in my life, and still am. I was angry that I worked so hard to improve myself and it wasn't fixing the problem. Math always makes sense, and this wasn't adding up.

Then, the next moment, with the hammer in my hand, the lightbulb hit me like the bricks hit Marv in Home Alone 2: Lost in New York. As I was waiting for Jared to arrive at the house so we could start the renovation work in the laundry room, I sat down in my navy blue 2001 Volvo S40 and I turned on a song by my favorite artist of all-time (Sean Cates). Here are the lyrics that hit me so hard:

"Back in the daily, my life was self. Living this life, I didn't like to fail... But that is just what you will do if you live this life just for you."

Boom. Fireworks went off in my brain and it all started to make sense again. In presentations, and in life, when you want to maximize influence, your focus needs to be on helping others, not helping yourself. That truth, perhaps, is the most remarkable thing about presentations. It is impossible to be great if you focus on yourself. The only way to the destination of presentation excellence is to focus on serving your audience.

When you deliver presentations for a living, you realize that most people don't care about you. They care about what you can do for them. In other words, presentations aren't about the presenter, they are all about them. If we want to maximize influence, the only appropriate starting point is to focus on them.

You will begin to win as soon as you help others win... And helping others win is not just the best possible victory, it is the only possible victory.

Unlearn Entitlement:

In the previous story, I felt entitled to a certain result if I applied the correct formula. That, believe it or not, leads us perfectly into the next paradigm we need to unlearn.

You are about to read something that is, for some reason, highly controversial in our world today. Brace yourself.

Life is what you make of it.

Yes, life might be like a box of chocolates, but it is more like a box of Tetris. Let me explain.

I have a good friend named Renee who runs an awesome company down in Louisville. She has a house in Florida and before she left to go down south, she gave Devin \$5,000 to invest in growing the company. She gave Ryan \$2,000 to invest in growing the company, and she gave Tim \$1,000 to invest in growing the company.

Then she jumped on her flight to Florida and worked the whole time she was there, and hardly enjoyed the beach for a minute. I have no idea why she even left, but this is basically a true story.

So, how did Renee decide to give Devin more and Tim less? She looked at their ability and gave accordingly.

Devin went out, traded with Chris, Brian, Nathan, Brittany, Travis, Chad, Matt, Ethan, and Anitza and ended up with \$10,000.

Ryan went out and traded with Ashley, Chris, Ed, Mike, Christa, Lane, Cassidy, Sarah, Brandon, Scruggs, Corey, Tom, and Rishabh and ended up with \$4,000.

Tim went out and put the money directly into his savings account.

After a few months, Renee flew back to Louisville and asked Devin how the investment money generated a return for us? Devin said here's the five thousand you gave and here's five more thousand. Renee said, well done. Thanks for doing a good job with a little. Now I'm going to put you over two different departments.

Then Renee met with Ryan and asked him how the investment money generated a return for us. Ryan said here's the two thousand you gave me, and here's two more from the interest we earned. Renee said well done. Now, we have this big opportunity to grow the business in a new market, and I'm putting you in charge of this initiative. Can you handle it? 10/4, said Ryan.

Then Renee met with Tim and asked about the investment money. Tim told Renee the good news. "I didn't lose any of it." Then he proceeded to hand her the full \$1,000 back.

Renee replied... Hmm, really? You weren't able to do anything to use that money to try and generate even a little return for us?

Tim said, "Renee, I know you have high standards and you expect a lot from us, so I didn't want to lose what you gave me." Renee said, "I never care if you fail if you tried your best."

So, Renee took the \$1,000 back from Tim and gave the extra money to Devin, knowing that Devin would invest it wisely.

That's a true story. Hopefully you've heard it before.

A Stewardship Paradigm

That is and always has been one of my favorite passages in scripture, it is called the parable of the talents. Of course, my version was slightly modified, but you get the picture.

Why should we love that parable? Because it doesn't matter what you were given. What matters is what you do with what you've received. This is called stewardship. You may have been given pocket aces and your peer was given less, but what matters is how you steward the gifts you've been given. This is true in business and this is true in life.

The other reason that we should love this message is because it teaches us that we all have responsibilities. As Americans, we've been fed this unending malnutrition message of entitlements and privileges. Thus, Americans are starving for true meaning, responsibility, and a worthy reason to live.

Think about it this way... If you were to go out and earn a million dollars, wouldn't that satisfy you more than if someone were to just give you a million dollars? Anyone that will maximize influence in their sphere knows the correct answer. The parable of the talents should act as a great reminder that we are to take real responsibility for stewarding the gifts and opportunities we've been given.

Keep in mind, to whom much is given, much is expected.

And no, I don't pretend to understand why some people get cancer, or why my Dad died young, and why everything happens in life. And you shouldn't consume yourself with those things, either. If we fixate too much on why things happen, we'll forget to invest time to figure out what to do about it.

In one of my favorite TED talks, Dr. Tasha Eurich talks about a study related to how widowers adjusted to life without their partners. The researchers found that those who tried to understand the meaning of their loss, were happier and less depressed one month later. But if they were still trying to understand the meaning of their loss one year later, they were more depressed. They were fixated on what happened and why it happened, and forgot to move forward. In sum, self-analysis and introspection can be great tools to help stimulate growth, but too much introspection and self-analysis can lead us to immobility.

At the end of the day, our focus should be on doing our best with the opportunities we've been given. I don't deserve more and I don't deserve less. Nobody owes me anything. This is how the world works, and this is also how the marketplace works.

The sooner we embrace this paradigm, the sooner we can start to live an undistracted life.

Unlearn Distractions

“Over the last few decades we have been inundated by a torrent of words. Wherever we go we are surrounded by words: words softly whispered, loudly proclaimed, or angrily screamed; words spoken, recited or sung; words on records, in books, on walls, or in the sky; words in many sounds, many colors, or many forms; words to be heard, read, seen, or glanced at; words which flicker off and on, move slowly, dance, jump, or wiggle. Words, words, words! They form the floor of the walls, and the ceiling of our existence.” – Henri Nouwen

We can easily agree that words are quickly subduing every crevasse of our lives. The quote above was written forty years ago (1981), before the internet. Today, our computers, phones, tablets, video games, and TVs offer us more distractions than ever before. This oversaturation of words creates a reality that words begin to lose their meaning and we suddenly lose discernment of what is valuable.

If we allow it, our thoughts will be corrupted with worthless ideas and blasphemous opinions, all of which are fighting for our uninterrupted focus and attention. They are vying for our time, energy, belief, and response. **They are trying influence us.**

Let's look at the news for example. They use words to take the world's problems and try to turn them into your problems. That's how they make money, and it works. If it bleeds, it leads – and therefore distracts. And ultimately, we shouldn't be focused on why they capture our money and attention. We should be asking what weakness in us was unable to prevent it...

One of the crises we face today is not that we don't have good options to choose to invest our time and energy. We have plenty. The challenge today is that we have too many options, too many words, too many things to do, and too little discernment to help us choose, and focus on the best option. How can we start to choose the best option?

Learn Addition By Subtraction

Perhaps the most important math lesson I've learned over the years wasn't even in a math class. I was a sophomore in college, playing soccer. Our Coach at the University of Louisville was Ken Lolla, and he walked into the pre-practice board room one day and said: "Matt, Greg, and Bryan are no longer with us."

Zach (my closest buddy on the team) and I looked at each other and were pretty upset in the moment, especially about Bryan leaving us. He was one of our closest friends. He continued... "Sometimes, we have to do addition by subtraction." And that was it, that was the whole conversation.

The very next sentence was: "We're going to start training today with Dynamic Stretching, 5v2s, Full Field 1v1s, and finish with 120 Yard Sprints until you all puke."

Alright, so I might be exaggerating that last part a bit. But that's pretty close to how I remember it. Those were wise words, and at the time, I didn't fully understand how important they would be to the rest of my life until Charlie Munger taught me the importance of throwing a viper down my shirt...

Take yourself back to May 1, 2004. Somehow, we found our way to Berkshire Hathaway's Annual Meeting. The market was back on track and Warren and Charlie were the stars of the investing show. A lot has been written about Warren Buffet over the decades, but I'm amazed at how little media attention Charlie Munger gets in comparison. I've gone back and listened to these annual meetings over the years, but the 2004 meeting had some special soundbites.

Audience Question: What are your thoughts on Compensation Consultants?

Warren: “We do not bring in compensation consultants... we don’t have any human relations department, we don’t have a legal department, we don’t have a public relations department, we don’t have an investor relations department. We don’t have those things, because they make life way more complicated...”

Charlie: “I’d rather throw a viper down my shirtfront than hire a compensation consultant.”

Just absolutely brilliant, that poor Charlie. But why do I share that with you?

It is not that Charlie hates compensation consultants, per se. He has simply trained himself to hate distractions. He has trained his mind to hate things that make his life more unnecessarily complicated.

In our world, we have words everywhere. We have worthless technology everywhere. We have distractions everywhere. We need to start choosing to throw vipers down our shirtfronts before we waste more of our lives with things that don’t matter.

If you ever Pareto (80/20) your life, you’ll probably find the same thing that almost all successful people end up finding... Most of the value or rewards we receive in life come from only a small amount of the actions we take. In other words, the majority of the output we produce comes from a small amount of the overall inputs.

When we take time to consider it all, we’ll find that we waste more energy doing things that don’t matter than we do by doing things inefficiently (we’ll talk more about that later).

That’s why I don’t have any personal social media accounts. It’s not that social media can’t be a good tool for some, it’s just not a great tool for me. It is also one of the reasons I haven’t had a sip of alcohol in more than twelve years. I have a lot of priorities, and wasting my life scrolling through social media and drinking alcohol just aren’t two of them.

We have a Maximize Value YouTube channel and a LinkedIn account, but I don’t even know the passwords. I would literally have to call someone on our team and beg for the passwords to be able to access our accounts. It’s not that these things can’t be valuable. I’d simply rather throw a hungry viper down my shirt than waste more of my life majoring in the minors.

I made up this important song as a reminder for all of us. Sing it with me... “Good is the enemy of great. Eliminate. Eliminate.”

Or just throw a viper down your shirt before you waste your life on stuff that distracts you from your dreams.

Vipers will surely help you stay focused, but then one day hopefully you'll wake up and realize you don't need vipers anymore. That's the day you realize you learned how to get true freedom, which happens to be our next area of focus.

Learn Freedom:

There are few topics in the world that impact all of us, whether we are interested in them or not. Not a comprehensive list, but here are a few: health, relationships, culture, communication, time, and success. For now, we'll focus on the last item on the list.

Success is everywhere. It impacts all of us and confuses many of us. Everyone seems to think about it differently.

When you ask people what they want in life, they often respond with some long-winded answer that finally ends up saying success. Then, if you care about the person, you ask them what success means to them. Most people will tell you that they want some sort of freedom.

Perhaps the most widespread agreement on the definition of success is this: I can do whatever I want, whenever I want, with whoever I want, for as long as I want. In other words, we feel like we have control of our time, or freedom to invest our lives however we choose.

Angus Campbell (psychologist) found that the most powerful common denominator of happiness was summed up in having a strong sense of one's ability to control their own life (The Sense of Wellbeing in America). In other words, most people want freedom.

Which reminds me of my experience with baboons in Maputo, Mozambique during the summer of 2010.

Baboons & Freedom:

On Friday mornings we would do some ministry at the bocaria (not sure of the proper spelling, but that is how it is pronounced), which was the most putrid and disgusting place on the planet, infused with some of the most wonderful people you'll ever meet.

After leaving the trash dump (it is a literal trash dump, not doing linguistic gymnastics) on Friday mornings, we had some time each week to explore the African bush, which was remarkable, by the way.

We had been there with the ministry team for a while when one of my missionary friends asked the guide how they find water to drink when they are thirsty?

Our guide explained how they set-up salt-traps for the baboons. Where we were in Mozambique, water was scarce but baboons were plentiful, and those in the bush know baboons love salt. So, what do the bush-folk do? They put a big lump of salt in a hole and wait for the baboon. The baboon comes, sticks his hand in the hole and grabs the salt. The salt makes the baboon's hand bigger, and the baboon's hand is now trapped in the hole. But the baboon loves salt so much that it won't let go of the salt. So, the men who live in the bush come and grab the baboon, throw it in a cage or tie it up to a tree and feed it a bunch of salt. What happens next? The baboon becomes thirsty and they release it knowing it will run directly to the water. The bush men follow the baboon to the stream, and voila...

Why do I tell that story? Today, we are the baboons. The salt is cheap dopamine. Baboons are addicted to salt. We are addicted to cheap dopamine. Addicted in the sense that we refuse to let go of the temporary pleasures even while knowing the addiction creates negative consequences.

There is an important lesson we should learn from the baboon, it is called: Freedom From and Freedom To. In order to get freedom to, you must get freedom from... Don't be a baboon.

Examples:

[Financial] Freedom to buy whatever you want requires freedom from compulsively buying whatever you want.

[Physical] Freedom to enjoy a six-pack (abs) requires freedom from enjoying six-packs (beers).

[Psychological] Freedom to enjoy peace of mind requires freedom from consuming anything stealing your peace of mind.

[Relational] Freedom to enjoy people who help you build a better life requires freedom from people who helped you build a bitter life.

[Spiritual] Freedom to worship God requires freedom from worshiping god(s).

[Time] Freedom to control your time allocation requires freedom from things controlling your time allocation.

Everyone wants freedom to. Few will do the work required to receive freedom from. Will you do the work?

Once you do the work, you might find yourself with something valuable you can share with the world...

Learn Distribution

You have the power to change the world. I'm not saying that to be trite. Every single one of you has one of the most powerful tools known to man... An idea.

But, an idea is nearly powerless if it stays inside of you. That idea needs to spread. Which reminds me of Ferraris.

You know, Ferraris are safe in the garage, but that's not what they were made for. Ideas are safe in your head, but someone else could probably benefit from hearing your idea.

Everyone has an important story to tell, and I'd even take that a step further. I believe that God created you with a moral imperative to get your point of view, and your story out into the world. Everyone... Especially those of you that want to be real influencers.

But, most people don't have the courage or bravery to share their ideas. They are more focused on shielding themselves from criticism and judgment. I've found that the fear of looking or sounding stupid is the main reason that more people don't share their ideas.

The question I encourage you to ask yourself: Is it more important to shield myself from judgment than it is to take a risk and try to help someone?

We all know the correct answer. But even still, sometimes that doesn't suffice.

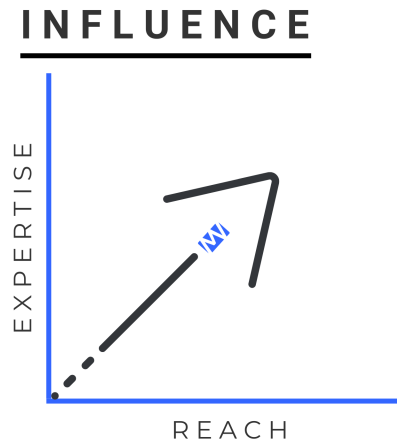
So, if that doesn't work for me, I recite these truths to myself:

- Criticism says more about the person criticizing than it does about you.
- He who jumps into the void owes no explanation to those who watch.
- Criticizing an artist is more difficult with a paintbrush in your hand.
- If they don't believe in themselves, they probably won't believe in you.
- People don't think about you nearly as often as you think they do.
- Anxiety is just my subconscious yelling at me to stop being a pansy.
- Your life will continue to improve when you remember that you can't and shouldn't try to please everyone.
- Truly successful people don't have time to criticize, we are all too busy working on our own meaningful work.
- The wicked person runs when no one is chasing them, but an honest person is as brave as a lion.

The Influence Equation:

Why share? Well, your level of influence is a byproduct or a combination of two main deliverables:

1. Your Level of Expertise (Results, Insight)
2. Your Level of Reach (Visibility, Awareness)



After a decade, or maybe less, I believe that most people develop some sort of expertise in their field. However, most people are obscure. In other words, nobody knows who we are or what we can offer the world.

If you have a story to tell (and you do) then just remember that the world will be slightly better because of you telling your story. Even if it only impacts one...

Corollaries on Distribution:

First, always consider the cost of casting your pearls before swine.

Second, be ready to offend people when you share the truth. Whenever you share something controversial, you have to be willing to answer their questions. To me, this is not always worth the exhaustion. It is only because you are aware of how much these people drain your energy, and not for fear of their criticism, that it is wise to not always share your deeper insights in a large group setting.

The best formula I've found for solving this problem is to share non-controversial ideas with the masses, and have the deeper, more paradigm-shifting conversations in a small group or one-on-one setting. That said, always be ready to answer their questions with a few thought-provoking questions of your own.

Final Thought on Distribution:

Next time you have an idea worth spreading... Share it. Use these tools to remind yourself that the full power of your idea can only be released when others benefit from it.

Paradigms Chapter Summary

Definitions (emphases added):

1. **Paradigm:** A typical example or pattern of something; a model.
2. **Paradigm:** A set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them, especially in an intellectual discipline.

After delivering over 1,000 leadership workshops, I've realized that most people tend to focus a lot on behavior and very little on mindset. Both are certainly important, but I am convinced we have it backwards. Why? Mindset drives behavior.

With that in mind, there is nothing more important than knowing what we believe, and why. Our beliefs matter because they define how we perceive reality and they compel every action we take, every word we speak, and every decision we make. These paradigms or belief systems, are quite literally the way in which we see and interpret the world.

How much of our view of the world has been skewed by the powerful ideological mantras within our culture? In order to maximize influence, we must examine the extent to which we've allowed the modern onslaught of ideas into every crevasse of our mind. No one else can do that for us, we must do it for ourselves. And yes, paradigms are complex things, but they are well worth thinking about if we want to improve ourselves and the people around us.

Within the context of influence, here are six of the essential paradigms:

1. **Unlearn Narcissism:** Stop focusing on yourself and start focusing on helping others.
2. **Unlearn Entitlement:** Do your best with the opportunities you've received. Nobody owes me anything.
3. **Unlearn Distractions:** Our minds will be corrupted with worthless ideas if we don't learn to block out the noise and major in the majors.
4. **Learn Addition by Subtraction:** Throw a viper down your shirt before you waste more of your life doing things that don't matter.
5. **Learn Freedom:** In order to have freedom to, you must get freedom from. Don't be a baboon.
6. **Learn Distribution:** The full power of your idea can only be realized when others benefit from it.

In the recipe of influence, we started the book with the main ingredient, which is paradigms. Paradigms are the main ingredient in our recipe because before we influence another person, we must learn to influence ourselves. In order to influence ourselves, we must understand our belief systems.

Onward...