JOURNEY TO
riginal
THOUGHT

We, actively or passively, pick up on ideas and information, and some trickle down into our subconscious and may emerge again veiled as a flame of creative outburst. Therefore, some of the ideas, ideals, and ethics we credit ourselves may have never been ours, to begin with.

I guess an even more critical question is this:
How does one start to think originally?

According to Paul Buchheit, the below key points are what he considers essentials of original thinking:

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING

1

Most of us fear knowing too little. We guess and pretend and use lots of words instead of stating the truth which is simply: We do not know.

One who asks might be a fool for a moment but the one who doesn't will be a fool forever. The next time you catch yourself using jargon and other means to try and cover up a lack of knowledge just use the Feynman razor and question instead of assuming and pretending.

You become an expert by recognizing patterns and recognizing and applying rules. To be originally creative, one has to break these rules. Yet as you work on becoming an expert, you follow them for thousands of hours and thus why experts are mostly in a prison of their own design.

Maintain the curiosity of a novice even as you become more proficient as an expert, for that is the sweet spot where magical innovation happens.

At some point, you have to stop listening to even those who know, for knowledge is a prison of its own kind. Do not be limited by other people's experiences. Just because something worked before doesn't mean it will now. Similarly, just because something has never worked doesn't mean it never will.

Something that might be even more dangerous than experience, is dogma and ideology. This is the reason why ideological societies are less innovative. I guess science has to kill god if progress is to be imminent. If you think that you are rational then you are already in the trap.
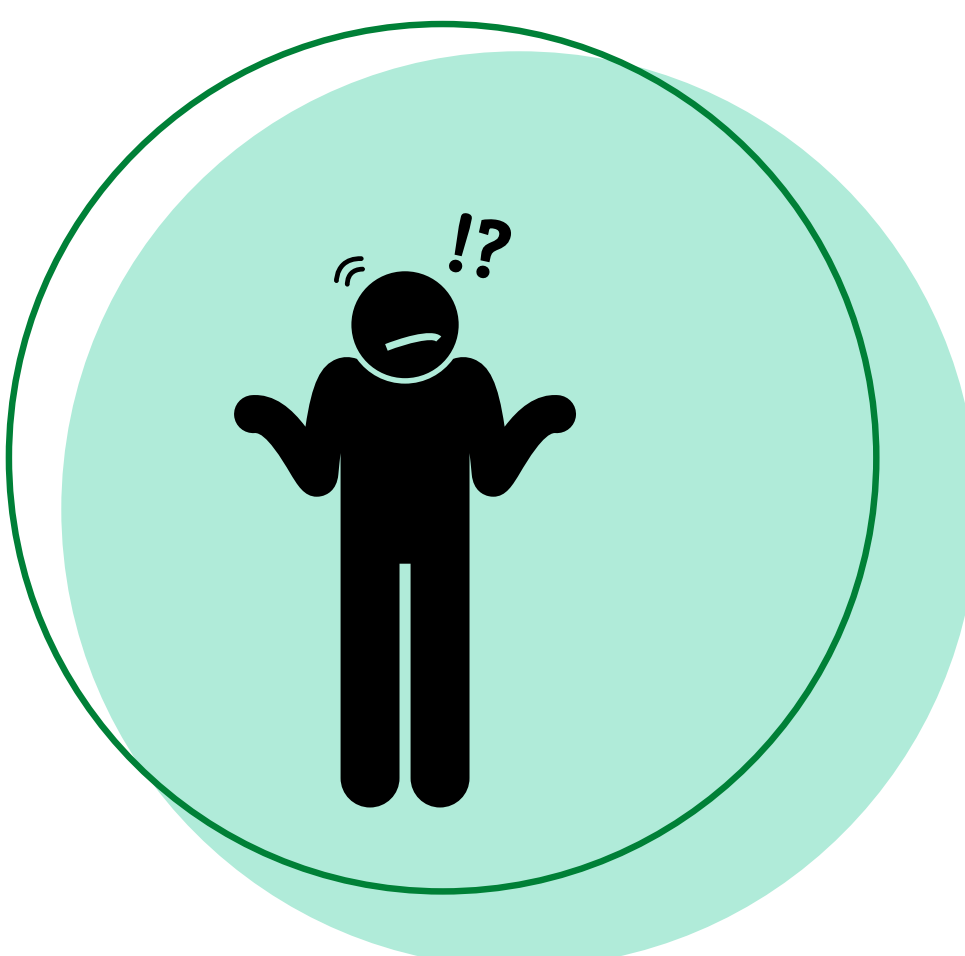
KILL ALL DAEMON PROCESSES

2

In our context, daemons include doubt, anger, self-loathing, the internalized voices of our parents, media, the internet and many more.

If you catch yourself in a daemon process, take some time to find clarity of mind. Meditate, walk in nature, draw, play, read, write etc. Do not assume to know what is pulling you back for as already stated, you know nothing.

ACCEPT AND MOVE FORWARD
(YES AND THANK YOU)

3

To succeed, you need such strong self-belief that it could be confused with delusion. This should, however, be caveated with a fast feedback loop that proves what is true and which assumptions are wrong. Reid Hoffman likens this loop to the OODA (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act) loop that is used in piloting.

Once you decide what to work on, you must move as fast as is humanly possible be it in a team or alone. Momentum compounds and success begets success. You can get to the 90th percentile of your area of expertise by working hard or working smart. However, to get to the 99th percentile, you must do both. Focus with all your strength on your chosen path for focus is a multiplier of effort. Work stamina is actually a predictor of long term success.

In his book, Algorithms to live By, Brian Christian states that: "Life is a balance between novelty and tradition, between the latest and the greatest, between taking risk and souring what we know and love."
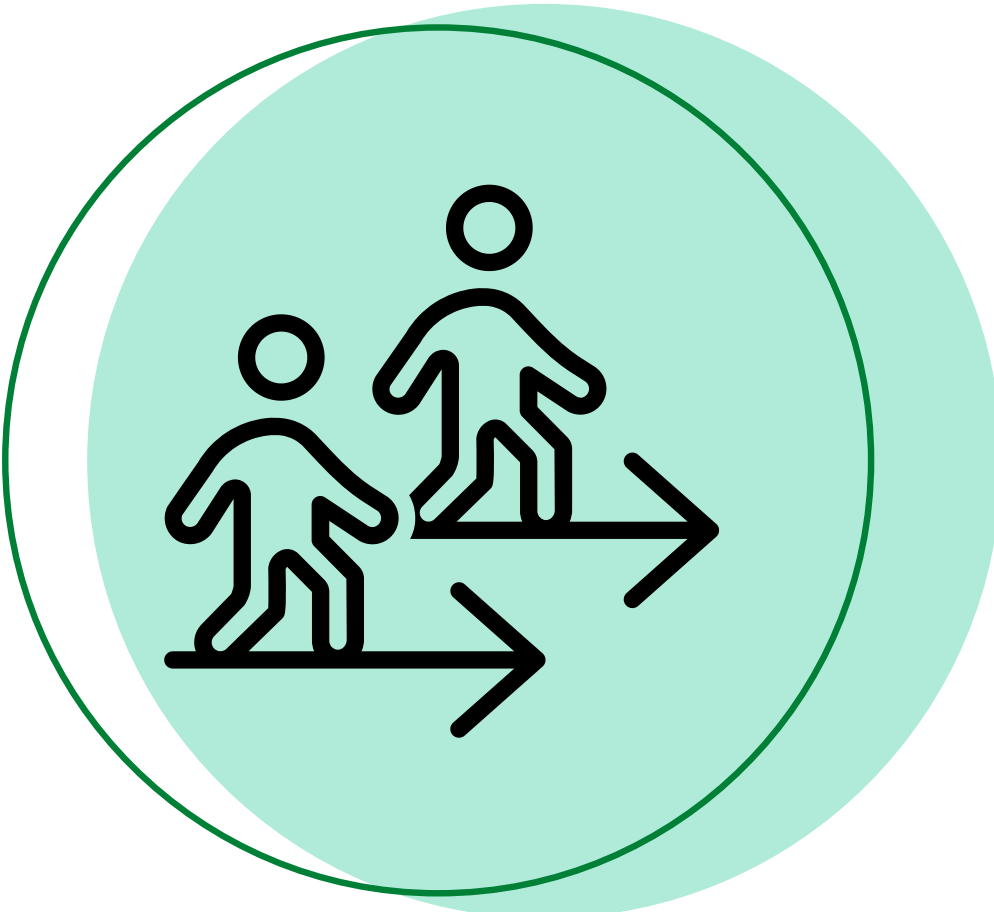
CHOOSE THE MORE INTERESTING PATH
(THE PATH NOT TAKEN)

4

Interestingness is a sign of unexplored/under-explored territory. Great startups exist in a state of productive uncertainty. Regardless of success or failure, they learn something interesting.

The most exciting things pass us by because they are hidden within plain sight. There are worlds upon worlds. This is not an invitation to do everything that can be done. This is just a suggestion to immerse yourself in unfamiliar territory every now and then and then go with the flow. The flow in this case is what you like, enjoy or completely love. That is your highest mountain in sight. Only by pursuing our genuine curiosity can we find specific knowledge.

LOVE WHAT YOU DO

5

Our decisions, not our passions, are what determines what direction our lives will take. Another reason why you shouldn't do what you love is that this advice assumes that what you love is fixed.

What we need is to change how we do what we are doing rather than changing what we are actually doing or neglecting it altogether. Being goal oriented might sound nice in theory but in reality it treats the time between now and task completion as an obstacle, a period to suffer and labour through. This is tough particularly in startups. An intrinsic approach to motivation and satisfaction ultimately increases the quality of our effort. You should do stuff to impress yourself.
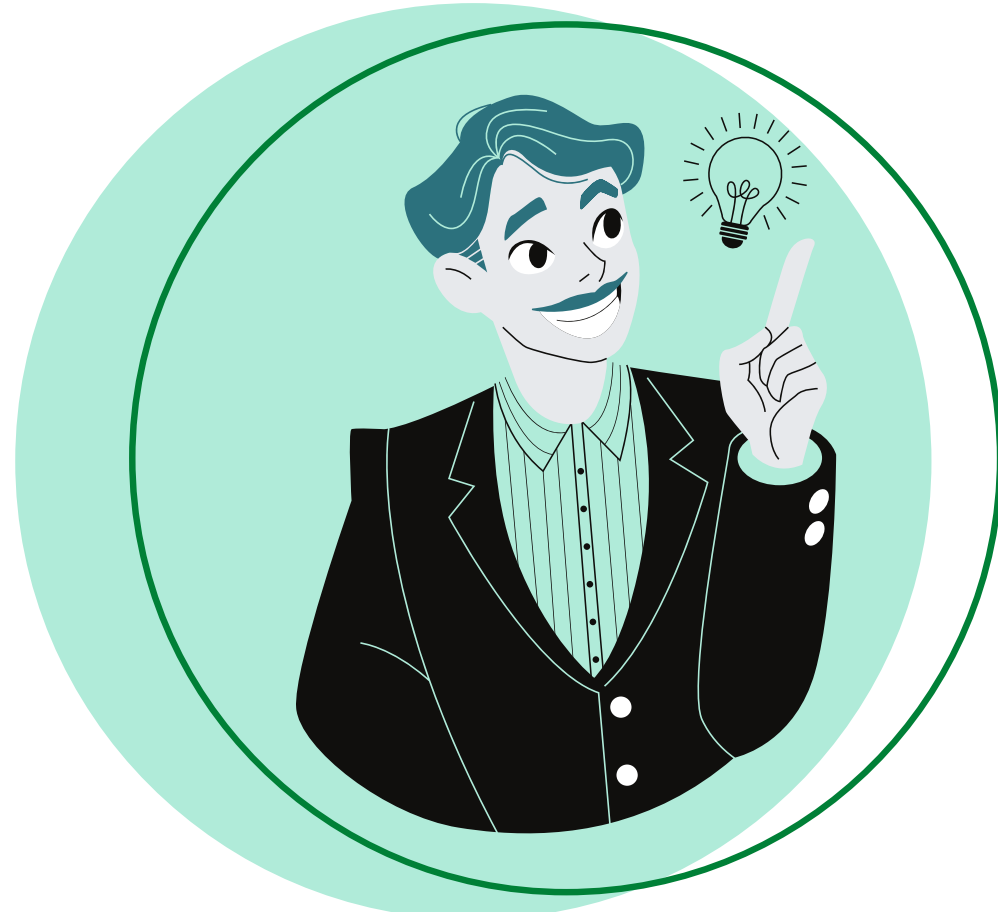
You should maintain a meaningful and inspiring vision to hack the grind dull moments because a startup is just like a baby (5% cute and adorable; 95% diapers and vomit).
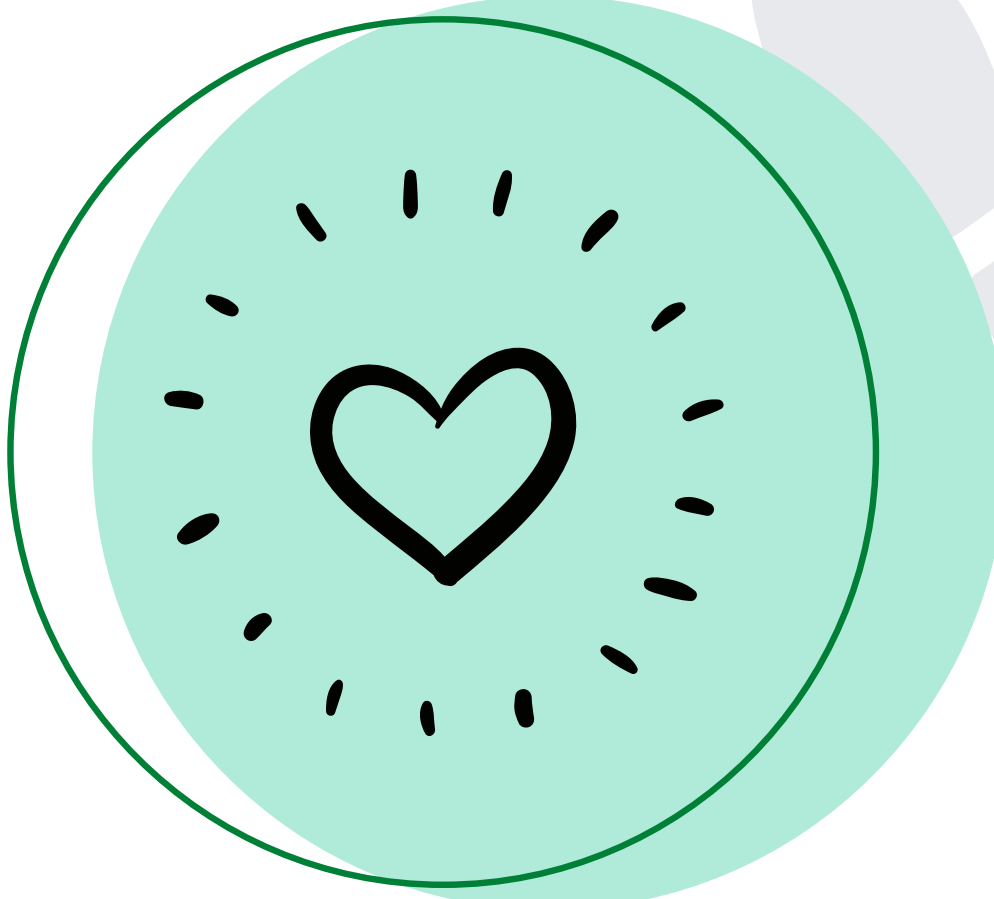
MAINTAIN A HEALTHY DISREGARD FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

6

You should have insanely great ideas in your startup that sound like you want to take over the world. Rather than succeed at something inconsequential, it is much better to fail at something awesome. Encourage doing impossible things. Impossible becomes the new normal quite quickly. Startups are machines for harnessing the fire of self interest, creating a self sustaining reaction capable of transforming the world. Economically, we don't need more jobs, we need more Steve Jobs.

This is why you should hire and spend time with rational optimists. Like Thanos, you must make yourself inevitable. Build leverage and competitive advantage so much that you are impossible to compete with. Compound yourself by letting go of small linear opportunities. This can be done by moving from zero to one every time rather than one to n, which is just copying or adding unto what already exists in the world/market.

A BLOG BY
BENSON MUGURE