

# Twelve and a Half

# What's in it for me? A no-bullshit guide to the soft skills that will help your business succeed.

Serial entrepreneur, social-media influencer, business mentor, CEO, New York Times best-selling author – Gary Vaynerchuk is a man of many talents and many undertakings. And if you've ever interacted with his content, you probably know that he's not afraid to express his opinions forcefully, and sometimes with plenty of profanity. But, conviction and cussing notwithstanding, as a business owner and entrepreneur, he believes that emotional intelligence is absolutely critical to success. In a business context, it may be hard to measure the impact of qualities like empathy, kindness, and self-awareness. It's much easier to focus on what you can actually measure and easily track. But Vaynerchuk would tell you: you ignore emotional intelligence at your peril. Without it, you'll have a much harder time cultivating a positive culture where employees don't fear each other or their bosses. There are many, many aspects of emotional intelligence. Which is most important? Ask ten people and you'll get ten different answers. So, in these blinks, we'll focus on the twelve that Gary Vaynerchuk thinks are the most important. My name's Brian, and I'll be your guide through these 12 key emotional ingredients. And, at the very end, we'll also talk about the "half." Let's get into it!

## Ingredient number 1: Gratitude.

To kick things off, I want you to imagine a scenario. I want you to hold it in your mind. Because we'll be coming back to it again and again and again. Ready? Scenario: imagine you're a relatively new business owner and you're totally fired up. You're gonna do this thing whatever it takes. Because of your passion, because of your determination, you've put out tons of content for your business on social media. You've got audio, video, you're blogging like crazy, Twitter, Instagram stories – everything. But after two months of cranking out the content, the results are just sort of meh. Sure, you've gained some followers. But no new customers. So what's the deal? Are you on the right track? Or maybe you're not doing enough? Maybe you've gotta change your strategy? Or maybe you're not cut out for this. Maybe you should throw in the towel, call it quits. We both know that quitting is not an option. And, actually, this hurdle you're facing is not a disaster. It's an opportunity. It's an opportunity to leverage emotional intelligence. As you know, emotional intelligence has 12 ingredients. And this is an opportunity to use them all. But we've got to start with one. So let's start with gratitude. Gratitude is the ability to be thankful and show appreciation. In the situation I've just described, you might be pitying yourself a bit; you might be thinking that you've got it rough or that the world hates you, hates your content, and hates your business. But pause a second. Consider how great you have it compared to so many other people in the world. You're trying to start a business, right? Look – a little over 10 percent of the world's population doesn't even have access to safe drinking water. Three billion of the world's people don't have an internet connection. You are trying to start a business. So pause. Pause and consider how lucky you are to be in a position to do that. Gratitude is the first ingredient, and it's extremely important. In fact, it can be applied to almost every situation in life. Regardless of what happened to you today or yesterday, you're incredibly lucky to have all the things you have – and you should never lose sight of

that.

## **Ingredient number 2: Self-Awareness.**

Self-awareness is exactly what it sounds like – a rich, conscious knowledge of your own inner life. These days, everyone thinks they’ve got what it takes to be a CEO. Well, I’m sorry to break it to you, but that is not the case. The idea of being a CEO sounds cool. But just because something sounds cool is not a good reason to do it. If you want to be a CEO, you’d better be doing it for an actual reason, like because it’s your calling – not because you like the image. This is where self-awareness comes in. Do you want to do something because you like how it sounds? Or do you want to do it because it’s who you are? Get to know yourself. Be self-aware. This will help you understand your strengths and your weaknesses, your true passions and your false ones. Let’s go back to our scenario. You’re a new business owner. You’re a content-generating machine. But you’re not seeing the right results. You aren’t getting enough customers. How can self-awareness help you here? Well, ask yourself: Are you putting out content that’s really in line with your strengths? Are you filming yourself talking when you really should be writing blog posts – or vice versa? Are you trying to give off a high-energy vibe when you’re secretly an introvert? It’s crucial that you leverage your strengths. So what are those strengths? Be honest with yourself. Use your self-awareness. We all know the cliché – but be yourself. And have the self-awareness to adjust your course when you’re trying to be someone else.

## **Ingredient Number 3: Accountability.**

At the core of accountability is the knowledge that, at the end of the day, you are responsible for every situation in which you find yourself. Take that in: you are responsible for every situation in which you find yourself. Now, you may not be responsible for the circumstances themselves. But you are always responsible for how you react to the circumstances. Most people don’t approach life like this. Most people blame. That’s their first reaction. It’s “Sally messed up my project,” or “My boss just doesn’t pay me enough.” Accountability doesn’t blame. You wouldn’t point the finger at Sally. You’d say, “I have to be clearer in my instructions to Sally in the future.” You wouldn’t complain about your pay. You’d say, “I need to ask my boss for a raise or find a new job.” Accountability is a challenging ingredient for many people – it’s hard to say the words “It’s my fault.” But those words contain immense power. They enable you to regain control of yourself and the situation. If you take responsibility, if you’re accountable, then you are in control. And it’s as simple as that when it come to our scenario. Accountability reminds you that, at the end of the day, all your decisions belong to you. You have the power to change your strategy, your content, your delivery. You and no one else – just you. Remember: this isn’t about beating yourself up. It’s about taking control. Which, in a sense, is what the next ingredient is about, too.

## **Ingredient number 4: Optimism.**

Optimism is, to put it simply, a hopefulness and confidence about the future. It’s not the same thing as being naive. It doesn’t ask you to delude yourself into thinking everything’s always going to go great. Instead, it’s just asking you to assume an attitude of hope and confidence about the future. After all, hope and confidence are the things

that will help you make it in the end. Back once again to our scenario. How do you use optimism? Well, by tapping into optimism, you can challenge some potentially negative predictions you've made about your content. If you've been telling yourself, "I'm never going to create a piece of content that works," try transforming that into "Tomorrow, I'm going to make a post that's going to change the course of my business." You won't believe how powerful it can be to think in this way.

## **Ingredients number 5 & 6: Empathy and Humility.**

Empathy and humility go so well together that we can group them. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of other people, while humility is the comfort you take in your understanding of yourself. Together, empathy and humility make it possible to truly put yourself in someone else's shoes without feeling in any way superior - or inferior! - to them. To use our business scenario again. You're a newbie in the world of business and your content isn't delivering the sales you want. You aren't getting customers. You can use empathy and humility to ask yourself why somebody should watch one of your videos. After all, your content just represents one tiny island in a massive ocean. There are plenty of other things someone could be doing besides scrolling through your channel, and you're just one person. So empathize with the fact that everyone is spoiled for choice - and that they may not choose you. And be humble about this fact.

## **Ingredients number 7: Conviction.**

Why should someone watch your videos? Conviction is all about believing in yourself. It keeps you on track and prevents you from being overinfluenced by other people's opinions. It gives you the power to choose to die on your own sword instead of someone else's. So, ask yourself that question again. "Why should someone watch my videos?" The best answer is: "Because I know what I'm talking about. I know something other people don't know, and they should listen to me." Conviction is one of the ingredients that'll protect you from doubt and help you to keep on going.

## **Ingredients number 8, 9 and 10: Tenacity, Patience and Kindness.**

Tenacity is the grittiness that inspires you to push on even when the going gets tough. It's extremely unlikely you'll achieve raging success on your first go-around in the business world. Maybe not even on your second or third go-around! When Gary Vaynerchuk first launched his YouTube channel, Wine Library TV, it had basically zero viewers. And the email newsletter he sent out to subscribers? It didn't do jack. But he stuck with it. He knew that building a business takes time. He had tenacity. Patience is the ingredient that enables you to maintain your tenacity. Without it, there's no way you're going to be able to get through the many, many tries it'll most certainly take to make your business a success. While we're on that subject, the emotional ingredient of kindness also fits in well here. Kindness is all about being friendly, generous, and considerate. It's especially relevant when someone else disappoints you or puts you in a

difficult position. You never, ever know exactly what's going on in another person's mind or life at any given moment. And by the same token, other people never have that complete, 100-percent insight into you, either. The lesson is to always be kind – and to not take other people's unkindnesses to heart. In our business scenario, you're making content for social media that isn't gaining any traction. You're not dealing directly with another person. So where do you direct the kindness? You direct it toward yourself. You're trying something new, and it's extremely important not to beat yourself up for not succeeding when you know you're doing your best.

## **Ingredient number 11: Ambition.**

Put simply, ambition is the desire to do or achieve something. In the business world, ambition has a bit of a bad rap. People with big dreams tend to get made fun of. But even having an ambition at all means you've already won. It means you get to strategize, set goals, and work to achieve things – even if you never attain your biggest, most difficult-to-attain ambition. To deploy ambition in our scenario, ask yourself a simple question: “Why am I trying to grow this business in the first place?” By answering it, you'll refocus your mind on the goals and targets you're trying to achieve.

## **Ingredient Number 12: Curiosity.**

And now we've reached the twelfth and final ingredient of emotional intelligence: curiosity. Curiosity is the strong desire to know or learn something. It's what leads you to treat new trends, ideas, or products with respect, pay close attention, and then research the heck out of them. Curiosity is an interesting ingredient to pull out of your spice rack in this business scenario. It may inspire you to consider just how deep an impact you can have on the world. Or it might help generate big dreams about how much your business can grow. These lines of questioning aren't about inflating your ego, though. Genuine curiosity helps drive your ambition and makes you wonder how far you can go.

## **Example 1: humility and curiosity.**

We've covered all twelve ingredients of emotional intelligence! Now, we're gonna change tack a little bit. We're going to look at a few more situations where you can deploy the 12 ingredients in more detail. Here's the first situation. You and your partner are out on a double date with two of your friends one evening. It's been a while since you've seen them, so you're looking forward to catching up. But right when you sit down, your friends bring up the topic of NFTs – which you quickly learn is an acronym that stands for nonfungible tokens. It's a topic you don't know much about, and from what you do know, you're not impressed. What should you do? Actually, maybe we should start with what you shouldn't do. And that is: do not just dismiss the topic immediately or brush NFTs off as just some silly fad. Instead, you should lean into humility. Acknowledge – silently or otherwise – that you know nothing about the topic. Listen to what your friends have to say. Don't change the subject. Then, when you get home, capitalize on curiosity. Go online and start doing your homework. What if this is the topic that'll lead to the biggest breakthrough in your life? You don't want your ego getting in the way of that! Capitalizing on curiosity is really simple. Just Google “NFTs,” watch fifty YouTube videos, and follow fifty people on Twitter. Humility will come in



again here as well. It's what'll remind you that you aren't going to know everything about the subject after just five minutes of research. It's what'll get you to spend ten or twenty hours educating yourself instead. To recap: Humility is what allows you to stay curious and not divert the conversation when it's not about something you're an expert in. And curiosity drives you to learn more. Talk about a dynamic duo!

## **Example 2: empathy, self-awareness, accountability, and curiosity.**

Time for the next example. For several weeks, you've been having trouble with your coworker, Rick. You're trying to impress the leaders at your organization, but Rick has constantly been stepping on your toes, trying to do your job for you. You're not sure whether he realizes what he's doing or not, but either way, you're frustrated. You feel that this situation is messing up your shot at getting noticed by your manager. How should you handle this? First thing's first: deploy empathy. Don't automatically assume that Rick has bad intentions. Instead, recognize that Rick is trying just as hard as you are. He might be trying to achieve one of his goals or ensure a livelihood for his family. You can't get angry just because someone else is working hard. To complement empathy, deploy self-awareness. Is Rick really overstepping his boundaries with bad intentions? Maybe. Or is it you who's slacking, and Rick is just trying to make sure everything gets done? Are you being selfish in your ambition? Together, self-awareness and empathy allow you to have a conversation with Rick instead of jumping to conclusions. In that conversation, you'd do well to implement a mixture of the two ingredients we've already noted - empathy and self-awareness - combined with accountability and a bit of curiosity. Tell Rick that you appreciate his tenacity and ambition, but you've been feeling like he's stepping on your toes a bit. Ask if his workload is too light, if he's enjoying what he's doing, or if he thinks there's something you could improve on. Through this constructive conversation, you can assess whether you could use Rick's behavior as an opportunity. Maybe Rick can take on some of your workload, freeing up some of your time to focus on more important projects. Maybe you need to escalate the issue to your manager or HR. Or maybe you need to lean into accountability and change something about your own performance. No matter what, you've gained valuable information which will help you come up with a game plan about what to do next.

## **Example 3: optimism, tenacity, ambition, and humility.**

OK, moving on. As a successful, forty-seven year old head of marketing, you've pretty much got it made. Your salary is a quarter of a million dollars a year, you're starting to get more vacation time, and you've finally achieved the perfect work-life balance. Yet, you can't get a certain thought out of your head. What if you started your own company and worked for yourself? You know you'd be able to pull a couple of people from your current place of work and get them to join you. You could even bring them on as partners and give them each 33 percent of the business. Should you make the move? Before making any choices, lean first into optimism. You're in an amazing position here. You have options! You have the chance to achieve something great. And even if it doesn't work out, you've got impressive experience under your belt. That means you'll

be able to return to the workforce as an even more attractive candidate. When starting up a business, tenacity and ambition can rev your engine. But a bit of humility can also be a huge help. Can you set aside your pride and downgrade your lifestyle for a little while? If you reduce your expenses, perhaps with a smaller apartment in a less expensive area of your city, you can save enough money to sustain yourself for a year or two. If things don't work out, you can return to your original line of work and maybe even get a higher-paying job than before.

## **Example number 4: ambition, tenacity, patience, and kindness.**

In the next example, imagine you're a young artist, fresh out of art school. You're looking for a stable job but driving for Uber in the meantime. One day, you're scrolling Twitter when you come across a conversation about NFTs. You read about them for a few hours and realize this could be your ticket to success. What's your next move? Unlike in the past, you don't have to keep looking for a job in the advertising industry or Hollywood. You can actually cash in on your creativity and passion. Mentally transport yourself back to when you were a teenager who dreamed about becoming the next Leonardo da Vinci. Tap into the ambition that drove you to art school in the first place. Then, light the fire of tenacity. Seize the moment, increase your output, and get to networking. Fight for your art even if it means sticking around in a cheap apartment with a few roommates. Isn't that better than forcing yourself to work at a corporation, drawing logos instead of landscapes? Thanks to NFTs, artists can make triple digits a year working on their passions. But that takes time. So along with tenacity, you're going to need patience to stick with it even when a piece doesn't sell. Or when five pieces don't sell... or ten pieces... or fifty.

## **Final summary**

The key message in these blinks is this: Emotional intelligence is made up of many different components, or "ingredients," that can be combined together to solve a wide range of problems in business and life. The author has narrowed the list down to twelve: gratitude, self-awareness, accountability, optimism, empathy, kindness, tenacity, curiosity, patience, conviction, humility, and ambition. By carefully analyzing which ingredients you know how to use well and which ones you're lacking, you can power up your strengths and improve on your weaknesses, ultimately developing a powerful arsenal of tools that will help your business thrive in the long-term. Actionable advice: Identify your half. So we've talked about the 12, but you're probably wondering what the "half" is in the title Twelve and a Half. The half is whichever ingredient you're weakest in. Whatever that is, that's your half. Vaynerchuk identifies his half as "kind candor." Throughout his career, he's given a lot of positive feedback to his employees, since he believes a safe, positive work environment is far superior to one defined by fear and uncertainty. The problem is that kindness without honesty, without candor, can create entitled employees. If you're always kind, always positive, without having the confidence to be candid about shortcomings, the people you're giving feedback to will never know where they need to improve, which may result in their falling short in their role. Vaynerchuk has seen this happen multiple times, and he wishes that, in addition to being kind, he'd been candid more often. Everyone has a half – a place where they could learn and grow. So what's yours?

