**Unreasonable.is - Four Strategies for Listening to Your Gut**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/four-strategies-to-effectively-listen-to-your-gut/>

I recently wrote [this post](http://unreasonable.is/opinion/listening-to-your-gut-lets-give-it-the-credit-it-deserves/) on how we need to rebrand the notion of a gut-instinct as being an individual’s “faster intelligence.” This gives gut reactions the credit they deserve. Rebranding the expression is only the first step, though. We need to develop mechanisms to make this faster intelligence louder, more lucid, and more pronounced. Below are four examples of how to liberate your faster intelligence.

### 1. Flip a coin.

Need to make an extremely important decision that could change the course of your life for the months or years to come? An easy way to help make that decision is to simply flip a coin. If you are torn between a binary decision, flip a coin and assign tails to “yes” and heads to “no.” Then, when the coin lands on either side, listen to the immediate gut reaction you feel to the results of the coin toss. If you feel a sense of sadness or disappointment, then you know that you need to do the opposite of what the coin told you.

### 2. Drink beer.

[The Foundry Group](http://www.foundrygroup.com/) in Boulder has a simple value that I love. Before they will invest into a prospective startup, they ask themselves if the team they are going to invest in passes the “beer test.” In short, is it a team of individuals who they would enjoy having a beer with. If the answer is yes, then they move forward with looking at the deal; if the answer is no, they won’t place the investment and they discontinue exploring the opportunity.

### 3. Eat dinner.

An incredible team leader, [Caroline Whaley](http://uk.linkedin.com/pub/caroline-whaley/47/3b/524), once told me a simple framework for knowing if you are working with the right team or not. She asked me to consider that if I went to dinner with my team, are there people I’d rather sit next to and others who I’d hope I didn’t get sat next to? If the answer here is yes, that likely means you need to have a serious heart to heart conversation with the people you don’t want to sit next to as something is clearly off.

### 4. Surround yourself.

There’s a saying that you are the amalgamation of the five people who you spend the majority of your time with. If this is true, then I highly recommend ensuring that you spend a great deal of time with the type of people who will help give you permission to follow your intuition and listen to your faster intelligence. If none of the people you spend the majority of your time with encourage you along this trajectory, then I suggest seeking out a new friend or two, or immersing yourself into a new community, in addition to your current friends.

**Unreasonable.is - Listening to Your Gut – Let’s Give it the Credit it Deserves**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/listening-to-your-gut-lets-give-it-the-credit-it-deserves/>

A few months ago, I was fortunate to catch up for an hour with [Alex Bogusky](http://www.alexbogusky.com/). Part way through our conversation we started to share some of the more significant entrepreneurial mistakes we’ve made over the past year, these regrets were correlated directly to a time that we “out-smarted” our initial gut reaction.

I am now convinced we need to rebrand the expression, “listen to your gut.” I think rebranding is the first step to preventing our rational minds from “out-thinking” our raw intuition.

**A Re-branding is Needed**  
I think that the reason we often ignore our gut is because it has been improperly branded. When we think of it as a gut reaction, it feels like our decision making process is nothing more than a fleeting feeling in our abdomen. In reality, as a good friend [Eduardo Garcia](http://unreasonable.is/video/sometimes-life-throws-you-a-curveball/) recently told me, listening to your gut is your body’s millisecond reaction to a situation that is the result of all the decisions, experiences, and lessons you’ve had throughout your entire life. It’s your body making an intuitive response at the apex of all your life experiences. When you think about it in this light, you can start to see why listening to one’s gut is actually a reputable source for making tough decisions. If I were to re-brand the word I’d change it from “listen to your gut” to “listen to your faster intelligence.”

**A Prediction**  
Just a few weeks ago I was sharing with George Kembel. George told me that he believes in the years to come we are going to see a massive shift in how leaders, teachers, parents, designers, and entrepreneurs make their decisions. George believes (and I agree) that soon, listening to your gut is going to become a compelling reference for making hard decisions and for making strategic decisions.

So, I say let’s all get ahead of this trend and together, let’s re-brand the expression so that we give our gut-reaction the credit it deserves. If you call it your faster-intelligence you’ll give yourself that important permission, and the confidence needed to follow it. The second step to making this as mainstream as George suggests, I believe, is to start building simple frameworks around how we can more easily hear and listen to this faster intelligence.

**Unreasonable.is - Debunking a Myth – Why & How to Do Business With Friends**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/theres-a-formula-to-doing-business-with-friends/>

If I’ve learned anything over the years, it’s that you should only do business with friends: with people you trust, admire, enjoy being around, and with people who make you laugh. Of course, there are good ways and there are bad ways of going about working with friends: Below I’ve included what I’ve learned from trial and error about diving into working relationships and partnerships with those I consider to be my closest friends.

How to do business with friends:

1. **Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.** The importance of sincere, authentic, and frequent communication cannot be understated. I do weekly 1-on-1 calls with all my partners and teammates, weekly meetings, daily quick standup meetings, once a month 48 hour work-sessions and once a quarter for a longer retreat. We talk about points of tension, points of gratitude, concerns, “yellow flags,” life beyond work, personal goals and aspirations…etc. This level of communication pay dividends and ensure that tensions never build up and that our team culture values authentic, frequent, and honest communication.
2. **Vest your ownership.** Most co-founders start their companies by evenly splitting their ownership in the business between the friends they start the company with. But often times, this will end up in a disaster. For example, if you start a business with your best friend and split the equity 50/50, what if one year into the business your friend decides to take a full time job on Wallstreet? They will still own 50% of the company and now that they aren’t actively working on the business, this will likely ruin your friendship. Instead, I recommend that you vest equity over a 4 year period and that you install what is called a one year “cliff.” This means that if any of the partners left the company within 12 months of starting the business, they will not get any equity (i.e. this is the “cliff”). By planning not just for the best but also for the potential of plans changing, you will save both your friendship and, likely, your company in the process.
3. **Make damn certain your motivations are inline.** A good friend of mine had a brilliant team behind a new startup and everyone was motivated to make it happen. But when she sat down with her co-founders, she realized that their motivations were unsynchronized. Immediately, she listened to her intuition and decided not to continue with the startup. Typically with friends, it’s easy to dive into a startup opportunity or a working relationship that is exciting, fun, and could be lucrative. But if your motivations aren’t aligned, whether it’s in a few months or a few years, your partnership will undoubtedly fall apart.
4. **Don’t live together for too long.** Although it’s a fun way to start a new business and it ensures that you are all fully immersed, my feelings are that if you want to live with your friends + co-founders, do so with an exit strategy in mind (i.e. give it a set time commitment and after 6 months or 12 months, plan on living elsewhere). You will still likely see one another 16 hours a day… but giving yourselves just a little space is important for any relationship.

**Unreasonable.is - Effectiveness > Efficiency: Are You Climbing the Right Mountain?**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/are-you-climbing-the-right-mountain/>

When I started to take entrepreneurship seriously in my freshman year of University, I was obsessed with “moving quickly” and being as efficient as possible. I saw productivity and my ability to grind through work as my edge. Today, I can say confidently that my focus point then, although important, was misguided. Nearly a decade later, and after having found or co-found 9 companies since, I’ve come to believe something different. It’s best explained by this equation: effectiveness > efficiency.

I used to scoff at the belief that working smart trumped working hard. From observation alone, I’ve never met an entrepreneur who has done something historically significant without pulling routine all-nighters. A big part of me has always agreed with Thomas Edison who said: “Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.” However, today, I now believe it’s not that working hard trumps working smart. Instead, it’s that as a team and as an individual, you must first work smart, then hard. Working hard first is an empty sense of productivity to an end not worth caring about.

The most important question, far more important than the pace at which you reached the summit, is whether or not you climbed the right mountain. Today, I believe one of the most common causes of failure in the startup world is simple: you climbed the wrong mountain and you felt great the entire way up because you were moving at an incredibly fast pace. I am the first to attest, I’ve done this time and time again. I’ve raced for the summit before I considered fully the context, our resources, the competition, or market timing. Today, at [Unreasonable Group](http://unreasonablegroup.com), we now ask ourselves once a week, “are we climbing the right mountain?” Climbing the right mountain is a new core value of our team. We live by it. And in my limited experience as an entrepreneur, I’m willing to bet that living by this value is going to allow us to live much longer.

**Unreasonable.is - Don’t Waste Money On “Experts” When Building A Brand – Listen To Your Gut**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/never-listen-to-the-experts-when-building-a-brand-listen-to-your-gut/>

**Let me begin with the obvious:** I’m not a branding expert, not by a long shot. This is just one guy’s opinion on what not to do when creating a brand.

Disclaimers aside, I think, for entrepreneurs, brand consulting firms and PR firms are the last outlet you want to explore when establishing your brand and getting your word out there.

### Brands must resonate

A good brand resonates with the people you are trying to affect. And we resonate and feel most connected with authenticity, audacity, boldness, vulnerability, and the imperfections that come along with being human. Your brand’s genesis must originate from your core and from the emotive reasons you are creating it. If you are an entrepreneur, you are about to dedicate the next 5 to 50 years towards solving a problem you desperately care about with an idea you obsessively believe in. Let that obsession and the vulnerability that comes along with trying to do something far larger than yourself, shine through your brand. Take the time to work with your team and build a brand that comes from you. Find the essence of why you do what you do and it is that essence that will pull on the heart strings and capture the intrigue of your customers and followers.

### Great Brands don’t come from consensus – They come from your gut

Bill Cosby when asked what the key to success was he responded by saying:

I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everyone.

If you are going to make a truly authentic and edgy brand, one that really resonates, I do not believe you can build this through consensus. Most consultancies and PR firms use a consensus based decision-making framework and although sometimes that is critical, when building a brand, this will ensure yours is average. A good example is how we even chose the name for the Unreasonable Institute.

The first person I asked, naturally, was my mother (as she is right about everything 99.99% of the time). We then did a survey of 6 different names (Unreasonable Institute one of them) and sent it out to a friend base of a few hundred individuals. I then asked a few “experts” in branding for their opinions on the “Unreasonable” name and they all agreed it was just too bold and one even said, too “irrational”. They thought it might upset some people and that many others wouldn’t understand it. Here’s the truth, they were probably right. But what I’ve learned over the years is that you need to have “outsiders” to have “insiders” when it comes to a brand. You want to have a niche, an exclusive group who can say, proudly and unequivocally that they are “x.” (‘x’ being the variable brand name, in our case, x = ‘unreasonable’).

**Unreasonable.is - The 7 Steps to Creating Powerful Relationships (Networking 101)**

<http://unreasonable.is/skills/the-key-to-powerful-relationships/>

I’ve never liked this age-old adage because it polarizes a phenomenon too complex to be black and white.  Really, it’s about how you treat the people you know and don’t know.  It’s about being excited and confident about what you do know and honest about what you don’t know.  And if you don’t know someone, ideally this blog post will allow you to approach and get to know anyone.

The 7 To Dos

### 1) The Person You Are Talking To Is The Messiah In The Room.

One of the most important keys to building powerful relationships is never to avert your eyes when you are talking with someone else.  Holding eye contact, even amidst a bustling room or people chatting nearby enables you to be fully present in your conversations and shows the other person how important they are to you.  Assume, therefore, that the person you are conversing with is the momentary messiah.

### 2) Listen & Learn. Then Speak.

When you meet someone, never start by talking about yourself.  Ask them not just what they do, ask them why they do what they do and how they got to be doing what they do (i.e. their story).  This will allow you to listen and to identify their interests, passions, and what excites them.  You always want to connect on a human level (not just a professional level) and the key is to understand stories and interests.  Learn what gets them excited and then get them excited.  It’s just that simple.

### 3) Be Vulnerable

Your greatest strength in establishing powerful relationships is to be honest about your greatest weaknesses. The truth is that moments of vulnerability are the very moments when we connect most with other people. People are also much more likely to find you credible when you’re honest up-front about the risks of your venture or when you answer “I honestly don’t know the answer” instead of trying to come up with a clever defense on the spot.

### 4) Isn’t Networking Slimy?

When we think about networking, we think of people who cleverly manipulate others to get what they want.  Instead, Keith Ferrazzi, the greatest networker in the world, defines networking as “sharing my knowledge and resources, time and energy, friends and associates, and empathy and compassion in a continual effort to provide value to others, while coincidentally increasing my own.” In other words, you should be seeing how you can help other people achieve their full potential. Relationships are built on trust. You gain trust by helping others, not by asking what they can do for you.

### 5) You Have to Make the Ask (no excuses):

One of the most important rules of building relationships and networking is simply to ask. It all boils down to being truthful.  If someone can really help you with something, do not be hesitant to ask. Indeed, most people are reluctant to ask for money, for advice, or for anything that could help them to a realized dream. When you ask for help, and if you do so genuinely, the worst anyone will say is “no.” Then you are no worse off than if you hadn’t asked for help at all!

### 6) Follow Up and Follow Through:

After any great conversation, follow-up by simply letting the person know how much you appreciate their time and thoughts. And if you want to distinguish yourself from nearly 99% of everyone out there, follow-through on the promises you make.  The key to this statement is to make certain that when you tell someone you are going to do something, you will have the time to do it well.

### 7) Conviction is Paramount

If you are going to get others excited about what you are doing you have to believe in what you are doing more than anyone else in the world. Don’t be afraid to express your excitement and your unreasonable ambition.  Remember though, you must be confident about what you do know, but equally important about what you don’t know.  This level of transparency is key to building quality relationships and to networking.  People are perceptive. If you aren’t genuine, they will know it.

**Unreasonable.is - 10 Key Resources For Beautiful (& Easy) Design**

<http://unreasonable.is/skills/nine-key-resources-for-beautiful-design/>

Today it is simpler than ever to create exceptionally designed websites, info-graphics, pitch decks, and products. Having now designed well over a dozen websites (including this one), I’ve learned that great design is not about coming up with an original idea from scratch. Instead, you can build upon many of the resources and ideas that already exist in the world. And, when you combine them in new ways… you are able to do great things quickly. This post exists to give you resources that have already done that for you. If you leverage the resources below, you will be shocked at how quickly you can come up with beautiful designs for your startup, company, campaign, or event.

### 1. Choosing the right font.

[dafont.com](http://dafont.com). They have over 17,000 fonts, many of which will blow your mind, and they are all free and easy to install.

### 2. Finding the perfect color palette.

There are a number of sites that will help you select color palettes. These two are my favorite:

* [Kuler.com](http://kuler.adobe.com). Kuler has thousands of pre-set color palettes ([click here](https://kuler.adobe.com/#themes/rating?time=30)) and they have a brilliant interface to help you make your own color palettes ([click here](https://kuler.adobe.com/#create/fromacolor)).
* [Colourlovers.com](http://www.colourlovers.com/). This site has thousands of beautiful and uniquely designed color palettes. Great inspiration!

### 3. Textured backgrounds (a trick of the trade).

[Subtlepatterns.com](http://subtlepatterns.com/). A good friend of mine, Evan Walden, recently shared this resource with me and I’m in love. The site has hundreds of patterns to give anything you design texture and life… and it’s 100% free.

### 4. Deciding which video player to use.

[vimeo.com.](http://vimeo.com)This is my personal opinion, but I think everything looks more beautiful in a Vimeo video player than on YouTube. I highly recommend using Vimeo for all your video uploads.

### 5. Iconography matters… use this resource.

[thenounproject.com.](http://thenounproject.com)This is one of my favorite sites on the web right now. It contains an icon for nearly every noun in the world. This site is truly an incredible gift and the database of icons continues to grow each day.

### 6. Building websites.

* [WordPress.org](http://Wordpress.org) & [Square Space](http://www.squarespace.com/tour/overview/). With WordPress you can build a beautifully designed website, that comes with a template, in a matter of hours (instead of months). For an even simpler interface that is also beautifully designed, check out [Square Space](http://www.squarespace.com/tour/overview/). We built [Unreasonableatstate.com](http://unreasonableatstate.com/) in hours with their platform. From my experience with it, Square Space is great for very simple content centric websites (i.e. not complicated platforms). WordPress is much more flexible and powerful and has a much larger user base / base of templates.
* [Themeforest.com](http://Themeforest.com) has a library of over 7,000 WordPress templates (many of which are outstandingly beautiful).

### 7. Creating business cards.

[Use this link](http://graphicriver.net/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&term=business+card). They have over 6,000 business card templates.

### 8. Making pitch decks.

[Graphic River](http://graphicriver.net/search?term=presentation&category=presentation-templates) has over 500 presentations already built and [Haiku Deck](http://www.haikudeck.com/) is a brilliant resource for anyone with an ipad. In minutes you can build out a beautifully designed deck directly on your ipad.

### 9. Designing your logo.

[99designs.com](http://99designs.com/logo-design) & [CrowdSpring.com](http://www.crowdspring.com/logo-design/). These sites will put tens of thousands of graphic designers on creating the perfect logo for you. On average, if you request a logo to these communities, you will get over 100 logos back that are customized to your needs. What is most amazing though is that if you don’t like any of the logos, you pay nothing.

### 10. Newsletter.

[Mail Chimp](http://mailchimp.com). There is not a platform for making, monitoring, and designing newsletters that compares to Mailchimp.

**Unreasonable.is - Beyond Debt and Equity: My Love for Quasi-Equity**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/beyond-debt-and-equity-my-love-for-quasi-equity/>

If you think it’s rare for a company in the U.S. to have a successful exit (i.e. get acquired or have a public offering), then imagine how unlikely an exit is for a company operating out of Nigeria or Myanmar… it’s less common by an order of magnitude. However, some of the greatest investment opportunities and some of the smartest entrepreneurs in the world are coming out of these “new” markets. For investors who don’t want to be left behind with the mega-trend of entrepreneurship in emerging markets, and for entrepreneurs unlikely to see an exit with their company, it’s important to look into new structures of investment that don’t rely on taking equity (broadly referred to here as “Quasi-Equity” structures).

Through my work at the [Unreasonable Institute](http://unreasonableinstitute.org) and [Unreasonable@Sea](http://unreasonableatsea.com), I’ve become intimately involved with over 80 companies operating in over 45 countries (mostly in emerging markets). Along the way, I’ve seen firsthand the difficulties of placing investments in startups operating in developing world markets. In fact, many of our [Unreasonable Entrepreneurs](http://unreasonableinstitute.org/all-fellows/), even when running highly profitable companies, may not even desire to have an exit. They are more attracted to saving millions of lives and running 100-year-companies.\* I’ve now had hundreds of conversations about the importance of re-assessing the “Term-Sheet” for the next-generation of entrepreneurs… This post is a highlight of the broad takeaways from these conversations.

For entrepreneurs who do not desire to be acquired or to go public, then the last term-sheet you want to sign is an equity investment. Don’t do it. It’s that simple.

**When Equity is Smart:** For most of you out there in the startup world, this is likely painfully obvious… Equity investments should only be placed in companies that have foreseeable public offering or acquisition in the cards. I won’t get into my opinions on good investments vs. bad investments, and out of respect for your time I won’t talk about Convertible Notes (see [Seth Levine’s post on this](http://unreasonable.is/convertible-debt-the-pros-cons/)). Instead, I want to remain focused on the subject of this post. If an investment you are looking at is unlikely to exit, then the last thing you should do is invest equity. For entrepreneurs who do not desire to be acquired or to go public, then the last term-sheet you want to sign is an equity investment. Don’t do it. It’s that simple. In either of these circumstances though, the investment may still be highly productive and profitable. So if the investment seems like a good one, you should look into debt-financing, factoring (see Miguel Ganier’s “[Impact Factoring Fund](http://investeddevelopment.com/blog/2012/05/introducing-the-impact-factoring-fund/)“), or the world of quasi-equity structures that will allow for your dollars to become liquid in the foreseeable future.

**When Quasi-Equity is Smart:** Whenever an exit isn’t likely or when a company doesn’t desire to ever go public or be acquired. Obvious… I know. There are two common (although not common enough) forms of quasi-equity: revenue sharing agreements / royalty financing and profit sharing agreements. Personally, I find profit sharing agreements to be very dangerous as net-revenue vs. gross-revenue is always a bit tricky to calculate (ex: a company can simply increase all of its employees’ salaries by 2x which would increase their costs of business and decrease net-revenue or profits and in turn decrease the amount of profits shared with an investor). Because of this, I’ll focus on revenue sharing agreements or royalty financing.

The concept of royalty-based financing or revenue share financing is simple. Instead of purchasing equity in a company, an investor agrees to receive a percentage of a company’s monthly or annual revenues. Typically there is a limit on this rev-share agreement that is either a multiple of the original investment amount (say 5x the principal) or the revenue share is limited by a period of time (say 10 years). Where appropriate, it can be a blend of the two.

BACKGROUND ON QUASI-EQUITY: Let me begin with a quick definition of what quasi-equity is. A lot of people have different definitions for the term (as it can take on many forms), but for the purpose of this article, quasi-equity will refer to structures of investment that take on the same win-win incentives of a normal equity investment but do not rely on “an exit” for investors to see a handsome return on their dollars.

### Why Quasi-Equity Can be Awesome:

**For Investors:** Many investors today make claim that they cannot invest in an exciting company that is having a positive impact on the world and that they believe will be widely profitable. They can’t invest because they aren’t certain how a company operating in Algeria or in Northern Mali will ever get acquired or see an IPO. They may also not invest in more developed regions of the world, say Spain or Japan, because equity is a enormous commitment and they have yet to invest in that part of the world. Furthermore, oftentimes investors aren’t comfortable with the commitment that equity has and the paperwork that comes along with it… I agree… it’s way too complicated (especially when international)! By adopting a quasi-equity structure, you can invest in these types of companies relatively easily. Knowing the dearth of equity investment opportunities and the explosion of entrepreneurship across the developing and emerging markets, I think quasi-equity is going to become commonplace / incredibly important now and into the future.

For investors who don’t want to be left behind with the mega-trend of entrepreneurship in emerging markets it’s important to look into new structures of investment that don’t rely on equity

**For Entrepreneurs:** If you do not desire to sell your company or to go public, and you are tired of taking on loans and asking for debt financing, using a quasi-equity structure may be a smart approach. You can have investors aligned with the health of your company (i.e. they don’t get any money unless you make money because this is a revenue sharing agreement) and you can ensure a fair win-win situation between you and prospective investors without giving up your sacred equity. When you are negotiating a structure for investment or a term sheet with an investor, you may want to ask them to seriously consider this option. You will likely find that they will appreciate your ingenuity and your desire to create a mutually beneficial situation. Furthermore, if an investor takes equity in your company, they are invested in you for the life of your business and there is no getting out of it (divorce isn’t an option). With a revenue-share / royalty financing structure, the investor is only with you and your company as long as the terms allow. Their need to have a board seat on your company is less and they will not take a voting control of your company (note: many times it’s strategic and beneficial to the entrepreneur to have an investor on their board… just not all the time =).

**For the Future of Investment:** More creative structures like the ones mentioned here (and many others) open up a new world of what can be considered investable. Companies that are thriving in emerging markets are just one case study. These types of structures can also be applied to revenue generating non-profit organizations and even to investments in individuals instead of in companies (which I’ve experienced firsthand) and will explore in later posts.

**Unreasonable.is - Japan’s Startup Culture – Seven Key Takeaways**

<http://unreasonable.is/opinion/reflection-on-japans-startup-culture/>

As part of having the world follow along with our journey around the globe, myself and George Kembel are going to start writing a quick reflection on key takeaways from each country we visit throughout the voyage. Our focus will be on the innovation cultures, startup communities, and creative ecosystems of the places we visit and the people we meet. This first post is a reflection on time spent in Japan.

**Seven Takeaways From Japan**

**1. Etiquette is Paramount:** Whether this is in regards to how your greet people or how important it is to delicately exchange business cards with both hands, or even how you should never pour your own sake, Japanese culture seemed to be centered around tradition, piety, and overt politeness.

**2. Business Cards = Someone’s Face:** In Japan, a business card is seen as a representation of a person’s identity… Specifically, it’s seen as analogous to one’s face. So when someone hands you a card, you must accept it with a bow and with two outstretched arms, you must admire it for an extended period of time, and you need to be careful to not fold it and to never let them see you put their card in your pocket.

**3. Looks can be deceiving:** I heard again and again that the greatest hindrance to having a vibrant entrepreneurial eco-system in Japan is rooted in people being too polite. Often times, someone will tell you that they love your idea or that they would like to work with you in one way or another. They will then go home and the truth will come out *(i.e. they think your idea is awful and they would never work with you)*. Without having a culture of constructive criticism and honest dialogue, it’s difficult for entrepreneurs to be challenged and to quickly get market feedback and advice from investors and mentors that they need to hear.

**4. No dinner parties:** It is very uncommon to go over to a friend’s or a colleague’s house for dinner. In fact, it is so uncommon that I met two individuals who told me that in the past 5 years, both of them had only eaten 3 times in another friends or co-worker’s house. Real networking happens over meals at restaurants and in the Karaoke bars.

**5. Karaoke is no Joke:** What I quickly learned is that in Japan, deals happen while you are making a fool of yourself and singing at the top of your lungs. Karaoke, although it may seem silly, is dead serious when it comes to business.

**6. Design is Everywhere:** While walking throughout the streets of Japan, there is an incredible amount of intention, design, and thought that seems to go into nearly every building, piece of art, garden, meal, greeting, and walkway. In today’s world, where design is now obligatory, I feel that this attention to detail will give Japan a real leg up on other creative communities and startup ecosystems.

**7. Incremental vs. Exponential:** I heard again and again from entrepreneurs, politicians, and investors that what is holding Japan back most from having an explosive startup scene is that the Japanese are by-and-large risk adverse. The focus of most startups is on the 10% increase in efficiency or profit instead of on the 10x “moonshot” idea.