

## **Blog Post #1**

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What makes people happy? Puppies, Coffee, Free Stuff- Free Food! -- In the TEDTalk “Choice, happiness, and spaghetti sauce” presented by NewYorkTimes bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell, Gladwell dives deep into just how oblivious we can be to our own desires-sure, like our food cravings-but also when it comes to our happiness. Despite this obliviousness, he argues that when given more choices, we are able to experience a heightened form of happiness.

The above is the introduction of one of my speeches I presented during my time in high school as a part of the speech team, which, like mentioned in the introduction itself, was about Malcolm Gladwell’s TEDTalk, “Choice, Happiness, and spaghetti sauce.” While at the time I chose this TEDTalk in particular due to its more personable nature, I hadn’t thought about it much after the fact until I was pleasantly surprised to see it this semester as one of the assigned weekly watches in my Technology & Management Seminar class. Rewatching the video reignited my curiosity in two concepts in both a personal and professional context: happiness and choice.

Going into college, I felt like I had no choice. To be more precise, I had about three outlined for me by my parents. However, once I got to college I realized just how truly gray life is and how beautiful that can be. There is no right or wrong path, there is just my path. In Gladwell’s terms, there is no such thing as the “platonic dish” (a dish that tastes and looks just right), there are just an assortment of preferences around any topic, be that about what spaghetti sauce one likes or about what career and life one hopes to lead.

What choices somebody takes outlines their life, and as a result their happiness. Beyond just our assigned weekly work, the T&M class exposes us to many speakers who are industry leaders and have had to make many choices in their own lives. Through them, I gained a lot of wisdom on how to maintain a professional identity that is both professional and authentic to me, thus ensuring my happiness.

In a more professional context, many of these speakers dove deeper into what Gladwell was getting at in his TEDTalk, that gathering consumer preferences in order to predict consumer choice is a crucial part of any business or technological venture. A lot of the time the consumer themselves doesn’t even know what they want, so it’s the job of the company, entrepreneur, designer, and engineer to recognize a market gap or societal problem and then provide a valid solution. Something I learned from all these speakers was that in order to solve a problem, you need to work backwards from consumer opinion

while also keeping an open mind. A consumer wants something that can drill a hole, not the drill itself. One of my favorite gathered quotes: If an engineer only wonders how to create a faster horse they never would have come up with the automobile.

Going one step further from just capitalizing on knowing what consumer's want, the T&M class taught me a lot about what it takes to not only make a choice, but see it to fruition. I had the opportunity to read and watch literature I otherwise wouldn't have been exposed to discussing all the "don't dos" when pursuing one's dream as well as all the reasons great ideas can get lost before making it to market. As an aspiring computer scientist, this greater knowledge of the market is invaluable information regardless of whether I end up applying my passion at a bigger technology company or through an entrepreneurial lens.

All in all, this TEDTalk along with the T&M class have provided me with more resources than I could've ever imagined in order to start analyzing what choices I have and gaining a network that can help me explore what choices for me would lead to the most personal happiness. I love the way Gladwell ends his TEDTalk too, with an interactive activity with the audience to prove his point. So, I'll end my own blog post by paraphrasing Gladwell's ending stunt.

Reader, if I asked you to come up with a type of coffee for a group of people and then asked them all to rate that coffee, the average score would be about 60/100. If, however, the group was broken into coffee preferences, and I made coffee for each of those groups, your scores would go from 60 to 75 or 78. This difference- the difference between coffee at 60 and coffee at 78- is the difference between coffee that makes you wince, and coffee that makes you deliriously happy. That is the final, and I think the most beautiful lesson. That in embracing the diversity of human beings, we will find a surer way to true happiness.