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"Kathy's back, and her new book is simple, brilliant, and useful. What else do you need to know?"

—Seth Godin, author, *What To Do When It's Your Turn*

BADASS

Making

Users

Awesome

Free Sampler

KATHY SIERRA

“In *BADASS*, Kathy Sierra—one of our brightest business minds—offers up a surprising insight into what makes certain offerings shine in a competitive marketplace. Believe it or not, many people don’t care how awesome your product is. Instead, they care about how awesome they are when they use your product. If you can tap into that motivation, you’ve got gold. This book shows you how.”

—Daniel H. Pink, author of *New York Times* bestsellers *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive*

BADASS

Making Users Awesome

Imagine you’re in a game with one objective: a bestselling product or service. The rules? No marketing budget, no PR stunts, and it must be *sustainably* successful. No short-term fads.

This is not a game of chance. It is a game of skill and strategy.

And it begins with a single question: given competing products of equal pricing, promotion, and perceived quality, why *does* one outsell the others?

The answer doesn’t live in the sustainably successful products or services. The answer lives in those who use them.

Our goal is to craft a strategy for creating successful users. And that strategy is full of surprising, counter-intuitive, and astonishingly simple techniques that don’t *depend* on a massive marketing or development budget. Techniques typically overlooked by even the most well-funded, well-staffed product teams.

Every role is a key player in this game. Product development, engineering, marketing, user experience, support—*everyone* on the team. Even if that team is a start-up of one. Armed with a surprisingly overlooked science and a unique POV, we can reduce the role of luck. We can build sustainably successful products and services that rely not on unethical persuasive marketing tricks but on helping our users have deeper, richer experiences. Not just in the moments *while* they’re using our product but, more importantly, in the moments when they *aren’t*.

US \$29.99

CAN \$34.99

ISBN: 978-1-491-91901-9



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Pre-release comments about *Badass*

“Kathy Sierra wants you to understand this: If your users like themselves better when they use what you make, they’ll recommend it with a fervor money simply cannot buy. No one gets this more clearly than Sierra, and *Badass* is her way of helping you get it too.”

Clay Shirky

Author of *Here Comes Everybody* and *Cognitive Surplus*

“In *Badass*, Kathy Sierra—one of our brightest business minds -- offers up a surprising insight into what makes certain offerings shine in a competitive marketplace. Believe it or not, many people don’t care how awesome your product is. Instead, they care about how awesome they are when they use your product. If you can tap into that motivation, you’ve got gold. This book shows you how.”

Daniel H. Pink

Author of New York Times bestsellers *To Sell is Human* and *Drive*

“Do NOT let the breezy presentation of the ideas here convince you that the ideas themselves are lightweight. They’re not. Kathy Sierra has become an expert in where expertise comes from, and with in this book she’ll show you how to make your product’s users experts. Or, as she puts it, *badass*, which is the perfect label for Kathy and for this book.”

Andrew McAfee

Cofounder of MIT’s Initiative on the Digital Economy and coauthor of *The Second Machine Age*

“Every once in a while, someone comes along who sees the world more clearly, and helps you to do the same. Every time I read Kathy Sierra, or hear her speak, I feel smarter, more thoughtful, and more caring. She has that gift of making everyone around her better. But what’s even more special, the “better” she helps you with is the ability to help other people get better! Genius!”

Tim O'Reilly

Founder and CEO of O'Reilly Media

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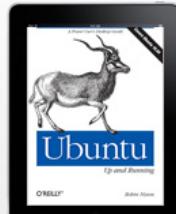
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Badass

Making Users Awesome

Kathy Sierra

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Badass: Making Users Awesome

by Kathy Sierra

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Printed in the United States of America.

Published by O'Reilly Media, Inc., 1005 Gravenstein Highway North, Sebastopol, CA 95472.

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Editors: Courtney Nash, Mike Loukides,
and Meghan Blanchette

Copyeditor: Octal Publishing, Inc.

Interior Designer: Kathy Sierra

Cover Designer: Edie Freedman

Illustrator: Kathy Sierra

February 2015: First Edition

Revision History for the First Edition

2015-01-23: First Release

See <http://oreilly.com/catalog/errata.csp?isbn=9781491919019> for release details.

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Badass: Making Users Awesome

This product **must** be a bestseller. Or else.

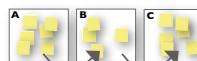


The Challenge

Prologue

- 1** Think Badass
- 2** The User Journey

How does he do that?
Perfect every time.



What Experts Do

- 3** Science of Badass
- 4** Building Skills
- 5** Perceptual Exposure

They said it would be easy.
This can't be right...



Help Them Move Forward

- 6** Remove Blocks
- 7** Progress + Payoffs

I never thought I'd
be able to do this.
It's amazing.



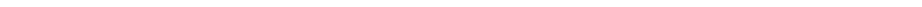
Support Cognitive Resources

- 8** Design
 - 9** Reduce Cognitive Leaks
 - 10** Escape the Brain's Spam Filter
- Epilogue*

The Challenge



Prologue



Imagine this happened to you

You **must** make a bestseller. **Or else.**

Imagine someone *forced* you to create a new bestselling product or service.

What would you do?

Oh, and don't count on a
big marketing budget.
No PR media tour.
No fancy launch party.

One more thing...

You can't simply be the lowest-priced. This has to be about sustainable success.

The clock is ticking. Everything depends on whether you can make a *sustainable* bestselling product or service.

**Where do you start?
What questions do you ask yourself?**

*Given competing equally-priced, equally-promoted products, why **are** some products far more successful than others?*

What's different about the bestsellers?

Why did these sell...



Sustained bestsellers

...but those didn't?



NOT successful

Our search for a formula begins with a question: why do *these* keep selling but *those* don't? What attributes do the bestsellers have that their competitors don't?

If we can't use marketing and lowest price, what else could fuel the success of bestselling products and services?

Something they *do*?

Something they *are*?

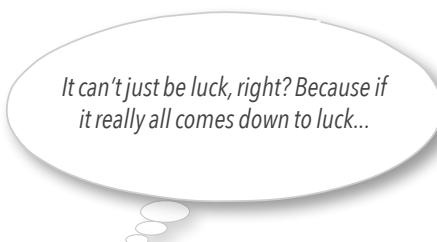
Something they *have*?



*Maybe we can reverse-engineer
successful products and services to find
what they have in common.*

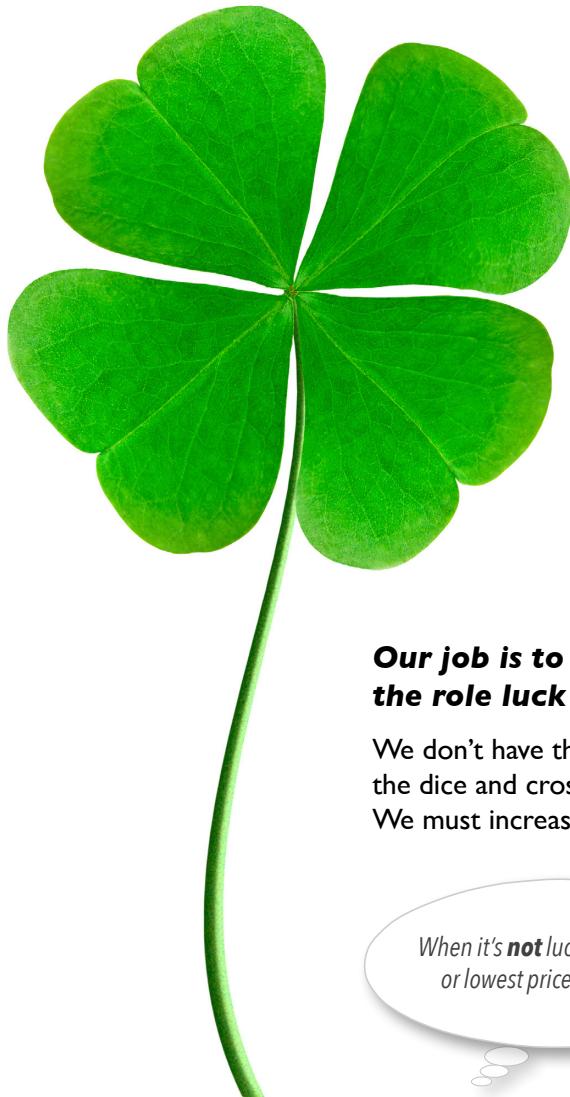
We need to find common attributes across products and services that are *sustainably* successful. There must be something we can use to make a formula...

What's our big fear?



*It can't just be luck, right? Because if
it really all comes down to luck...*

Luck always plays a role



**Our job is to shrink
the role luck plays.**



We don't have the luxury of rolling
the dice and crossing our fingers.
We must increase our odds.

*When it's **not** luck or marketing
or lowest price... what is it?*

Does the best product win?

Does desirability increase as a function of quality?



We use “desirability” here to include not only what we *want-but-don’t-have*, but also what we *have-and-want-to-keep/replace*.

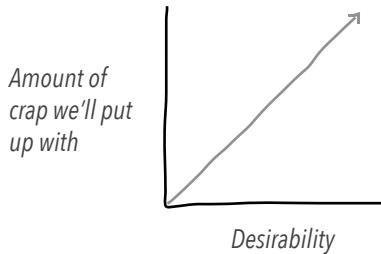
When you remove luck, marketing, and price from the equation, is it *quality* that drives desirability?

Is it simply *best product wins*?

And if it’s *quality* that drives desirability, who defines “quality” and “best” for a particular product or service? Is it based on objective measurements of craftsmanship and materials? Is it about speed or durability? Beauty? Strength? User-friendliness? How does our definition of quality shift depending on the product type and market demographics?

No, there are too many examples where “best” is not the bestseller...

This is also true



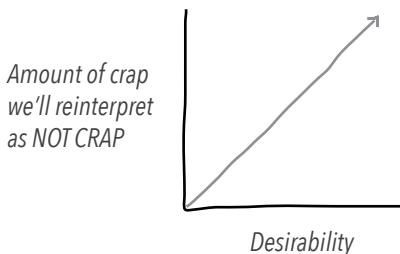
Tolerance for problems is a function of desirability

Even if we *could* define “quality” in some useful, objective way for a given product or service, if we *really* like something, we’re willing to accept flaws, problems, issues, even a higher price.

Quality can drive desirability.
Desirability can drive (perceived) quality.

*And high desirability makes us willing to do more than just **tolerate** flaws...*

And this is also true



Reframing problems as *not-problems* is a function of desirability

Desirability changes our perception of “flaws.” The more we love something, the more likely we are to not just tolerate problems but reinterpret them as *not* problems.

We minimize, downplay, deny.
We spin bugs as features.

Product/service love is (nearly) blind.

For our formula, we'll have to look somewhere else. *Quality* (whatever that actually means) doesn't guarantee desirability.

If highest quality isn't our answer, where else can we look? If the goal is desirability, what makes that happen?



*None of this matters if nobody knows
about us. We need marketing!*

Just because we don't have a marketing *budget* doesn't mean we're not *doing marketing*. But when we look at sustainably successful products and services, the common attribute is *not* their marketing.

We can all name high-profile massive marketing failures (think: Windows 8).

But our challenge explicitly rules out a big marketing budget. Out-spending the competition on marketing is not an option, but what's the alternative?

Let's ask some "friends"...

Here's what my "friends" and social media consultants say:

It's the Attention Economy

One word:
Viral Video

Uh, no, it's the
Intention Economy

If your brand's not on
Facebook, you don't exist.

Actually it's the
Sharing Economy

Influencers. It's all about influencers.
And Pinfluencers. You do have a
Pinterest plan, right?

Twitter. Duh.

Content Strategy!

YouTube

Tastemakers!

Social Mobile
Gamification

It's the App Economy

Don't out-spend the competition,
just out-friend and out-trend them!





A strategy based on out-friend or out-trend the competition is exhausting and fragile.

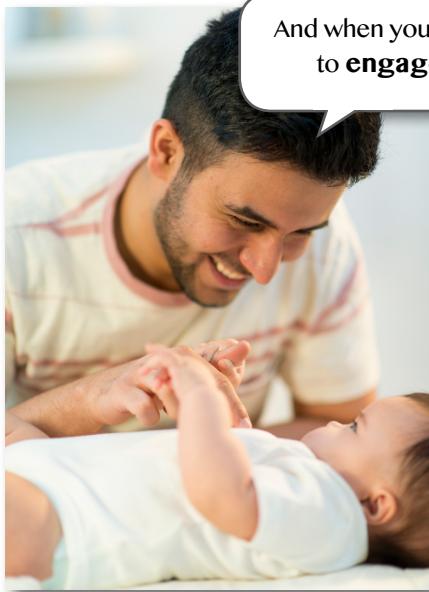
What does an out-friend/out-trend strategy hope to “win”?

The brand engagement arms race.

They’re on Pinterest? We need to be there. They’ve got YouTube videos? Let’s do that too. And oh, look, yet *another* new social network where our brand needs a “presence.”

Trying to stay one *follower*, one *like*, one *meme*, ahead of competitors is *not* a robust, durable strategy. It is *not* a sustainable path to long-term success.

And is “engagement” really what we want?



And when you grow up, you'll get
to **engage** with **brands**!

If it drains *our* energy to out-engage our competitors, imagine what all this brand engagement does to our *users*?

On their deathbed, nobody will say:

“If only I’d engaged more with brands.”

If we can’t out-spend, out-friend, or out-trend the competition, how else can we build desirability?

Which brings us back to... how?

What did these do...



Sustained bestsellers

...but those didn't?



NOT successful

*And here we still are,
without a formula.*

If we can't out-spend, out-friend, or out-trend the competition, what's left?

What does make a difference? What are the attributes of the long-term bestsellers?

This. The bestsellers had this:



Every moment of every day, somebody mentions something they *love-could-not-do-without*. Whether face-to-face or in blogs, reviews, discussions, tweets, comments, updates, texts, photos—people *talk*.

Sustained bestsellers are recommended.

And it makes all the difference.

In this book we mean “recommended” *literally*. When we say *word of mouth* (WOM) think *only* of honest, *non-incentivized* comments about either the product or the results the user got with it.

When people talk about a brand’s contest to win an iPad, or a funny viral video, they’re talking about the brand’s *marketing*, and that’s *not* the word of mouth we’re looking for.

Word of Mouth

92% say they trust
recommendations from friends and family
above all other forms of advertising

70% say they trust online
consumer reviews, the second most
trusted recommendation above all other
forms of advertising.

Source: Nielsen's *Global Trust in Advertising report*
<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/reports/2012/global-trust-in-advertising-and-brand-messages.html>

The answer begins here.
True, trusted recommendations.

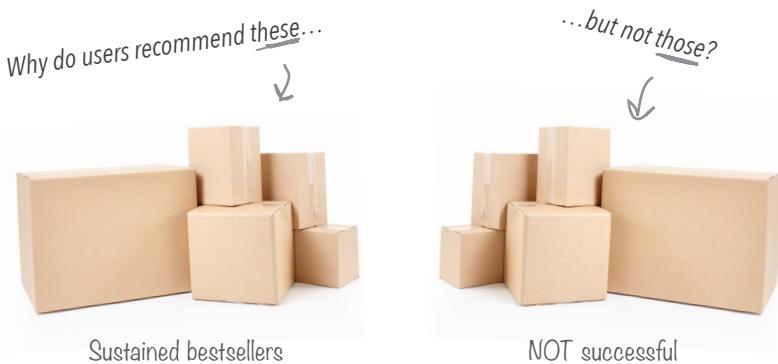
Not faked, bribed, or bought.

Not a brand masquerading as our “friend” on social media.

It doesn't have to be from a person we actually know in real-life, but it must be from someone (or something) we trust more than we trust a brand. And most of us still trust a total stranger on Amazon more than the “brand friend” we “like” on Facebook. (That we “liked” for a chance to win an iPod.)

Note: Amazon reviews aren't entirely trusted either, thanks to well-publicized stories of fake positive reviews by the author or fake negative reviews by a rival. Even in the face of potentially fake reviews, we still trust them more than we trust the brand's own messages.

We're still left with the Big Question: If it's honest word of mouth that drives sustained success, what drives word of mouth?



If the common attribute of sustained bestsellers is “recommended by trusted sources,” the real question is:
what inspires those recommendations?

First, a pop quiz:

Which would you rather have a user feel?

Which of these would be a better predictor of sustained success?

Which of these feelings inspires more honest word of mouth?

Imagine you were forced to pick just one*

This **product** is awesome!

A



This **company** is awesome!

B



This **brand** is awesome!

C



*Yes, “it depends” but think of it as, “In general, this one would probably be the best reflection of success.”

It's Secret Answer D

(Sorry, this was a trick question.)

I'm awesome!



It's not about our *product*, our *company*, our *brand*.

It's not about how the user feels about *us*.

It's about how the user feels about *himself*, in the context of whatever it is our product, service, cause helps him do and be.

But people don't actually talk like that. Nobody says, "I'm awesome" because of a product. They say, "I love this" or "This app is amazing."

It's not about the actual words they say, but about the *feelings* that inspired them to say it. "I'm awesome because of this" is the *feeling* behind their actual words, "This *thing* is awesome".

They don't say they like the product because they like the product.

They say they like the product because they like themselves.

What he **says:**



What he **means:**



Word of mouth as a key to our formula. We want people to say, "You **must** get this!"

But behind their authentic recommendation is a feeling about what this product enabled them to do or be.

We've been looking in the wrong place

The key attributes of sustained success don't live in the *product*.

The key attributes live in the user. ↘



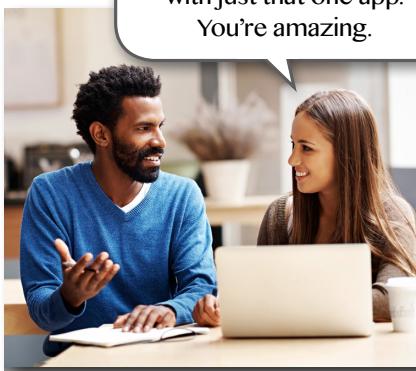
Instead of looking for common attributes across successful *products*, we must look for common attributes across successful users of those *products*.

“Awesome product!” is a side-effect

**What we
THINK is true**



**What's
ACTUALLY
true**



Our users don't bask in the glow of our awesome product.

Our product basks in the glow of our users' result with it.

Exercise: write your ideal Amazon review

Don't turn the page until you've at least thought about it.

This is not a *marketing exercise* on the reviews or testimonials most likely to drive sales. This is about reviews that best reflect what we hope our users will think and feel.

Do this exercise *without* thinking about how good the review makes your product/brand look to others.



Write your review here

Which of these do you prefer?

★★★★★ Wonderful product! I love it!

This is an excellent product! Easy to use, yet powerful.
Looks like it will last forever. You won't regret this purchase!



Looks good, but reads like a brochure.
It's mostly about the **product**.

★★★★★ Amazing! Works perfectly!

The instructions were a little weak, but I was able to set it up myself in less than 5 minutes. I've already made amazing progress with it in three weeks! You won't regret this purchase!

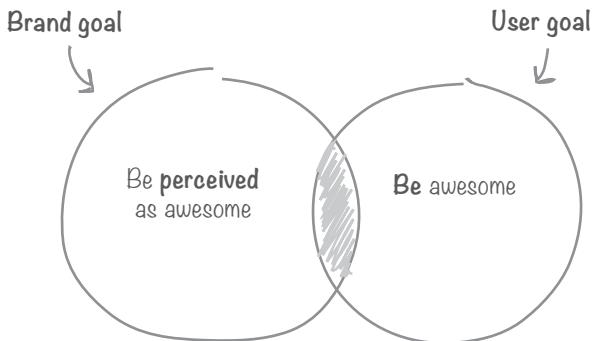


Much better! Reviewer talks about **herself** and her results.

We want to build products, service, and support in ways that inspire users to talk about *themselves*.

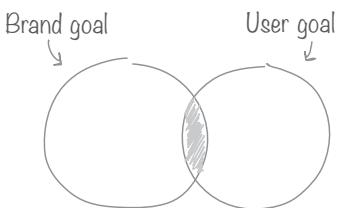
But there's a problem...

A sad Venn diagram

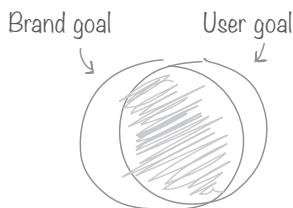


Too often, the goals of a company and the goals of its users aren't just *different* but *mutually exclusive*.

How do we move from THIS...



...to THIS?



If the answer lives not in the *product* but in the *successful user*, what are the common attributes of a successful user?

What does it mean to be a “successful” user?

Reverse-engineering Successful Users

If we look at successful users across a wide range of products, services, hobbies, etc. we find common attributes. The first step in creating successful users is to observe successful users.

How do they behave? What do they do? What do they say?



At the core, though, there's **one** key attribute of successful users that's driving all of the others. What is it?

*Where you find successful users,
you find users that are...*

Successful users means badass users



Not badass products, badass users.

Not amazing *apps*, amazing users.

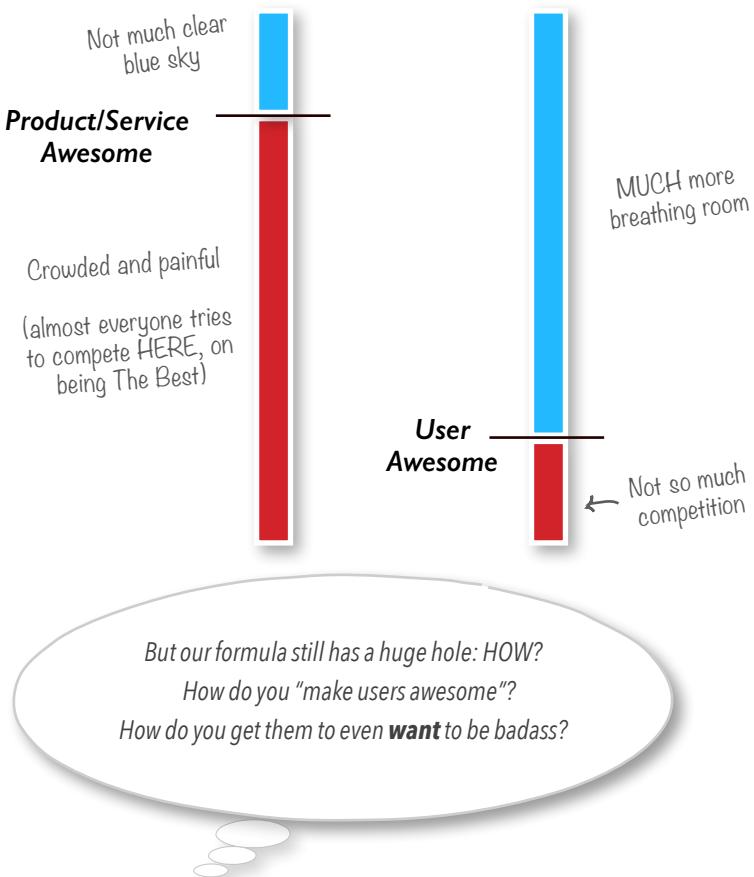
Where you find *sustained* success driven by recommendations, you find *badass users*. Smarter, more skillful, more powerful users. Users who know more and can do more in a way that's personally meaningful.

Users don't evangelize to their friends because they like the product, they evangelize to their friends because they like their friends.

(inspired by a quote from Mike Arauz)

The bar is lower for competing on user awesomeness vs. product awesomeness

Most companies compete on the quality of the product, not the quality of the user's results with the product. Competing on user awesome means fewer direct competitors, even within the same product/service category.



(Note: this graph was inspired in part by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne's "Blue Ocean Strategy.")

What do these have in common?

Colors on my latest video
came out perfect.



I built this in less
than two hours.



They said I got the deal
because of those charts in
my spreadsheet.



Results

User **Badass** = User **Results**

Badass users are **better** users.

Much better.

It's about what they can *do* or *be*
as a result of what our product,
service, experience *enables*.

Sustained bestsellers help their
users get badass *results*.

Yeah, just one small thing...

badass at WHAT? What about simple utilities?

What if there's nothing to be badass at?

*Before we can create badass
users, we must answer the
question, “Badass at what?”*

Badass at... what?

What happens if we don't make snowboards, video editing software, or anything else that someone *can* become badass at?

Imagine a tiny little utility tool "X."

What does having X *enable*?

What can people *now* do because of X that they *couldn't* do without it?

What can people now do *better* because of X?

What are people *not* doing now but *could* if they took advantage of all that X supports?

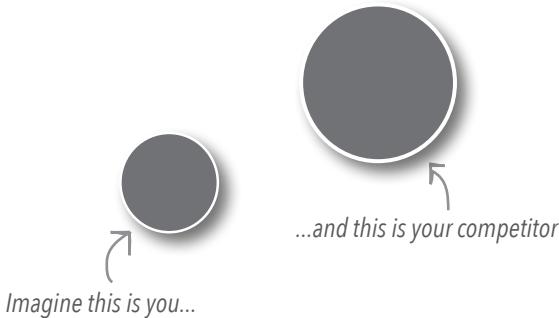
That's just a warm-up. The exercise on the next set of pages will ask you to define something linked to your product, service, or cause that users *can* become badass at. Regardless of how unlikely it may seem, anything can be linked to the potential for badass results. The key lies in answering this:

"What are you a subset of?"

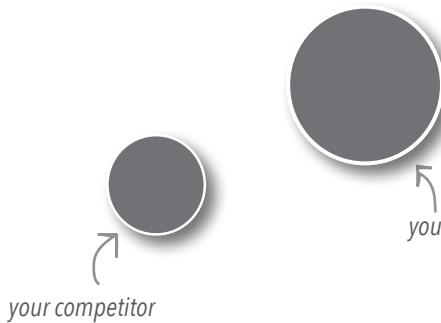
Even if you already know what badass means for your product or service, don't skip this quick exercise. We'll refer to pieces of it throughout the rest of the book, and it might give you more ideas for new things your users *can* become badass at.

The Superset Exercise

(Answering “Badass at *what?*”)



Or maybe your relative sizes are reversed:

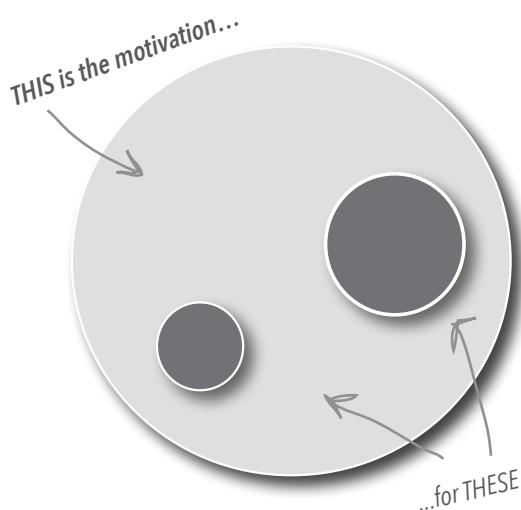
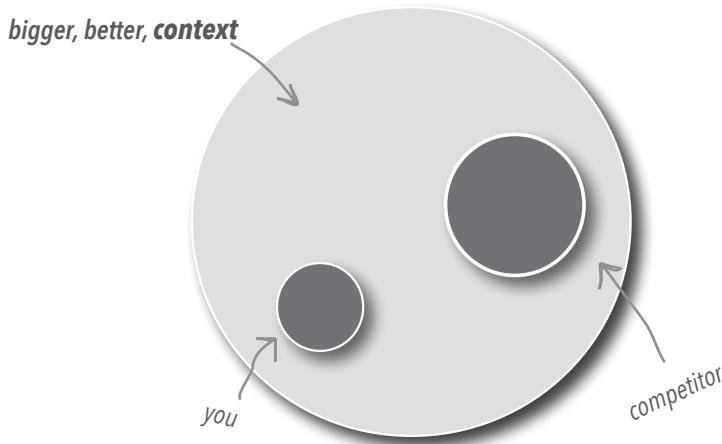


But how big you are relative to your competition is not what matters here.

What matters most is asking one crucial question...

What are you both a subset of?

Your thing is a subset of some bigger, more *compelling* thing.
What's the context in which your product or service is used?



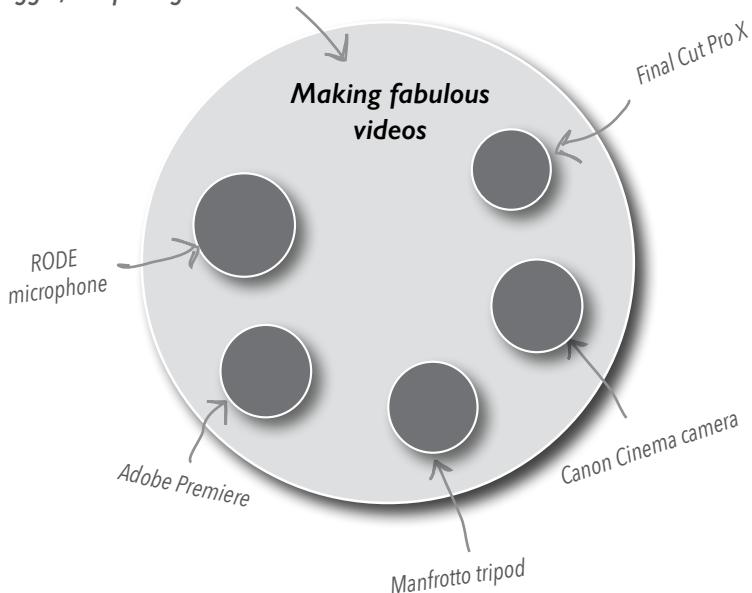
What's your bigger compelling context?

What are you a subset of?

(You could have many different answers, depending on how far you expand the context.)

Example

bigger, compelling context



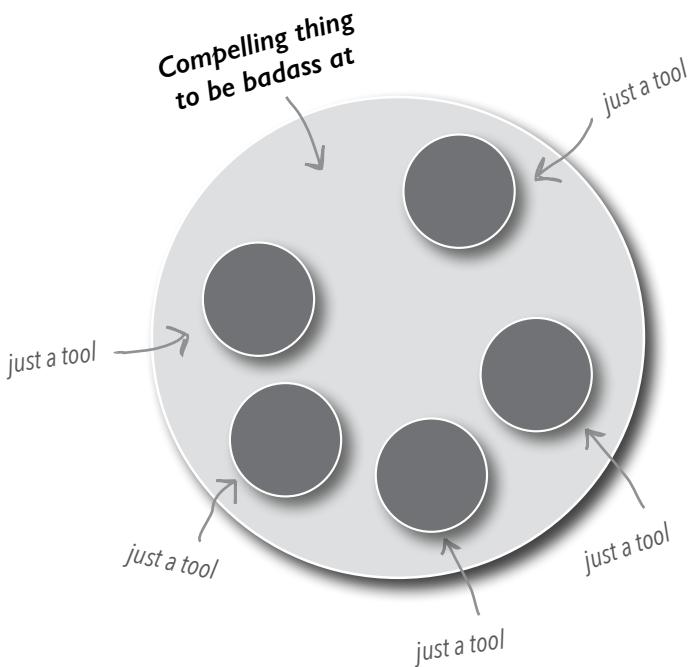
Video editing software, cameras, lighting, and microphones are all *subsets* of video creation.

What I really want to do is be
THE best tripod expert.



Nobody says this.

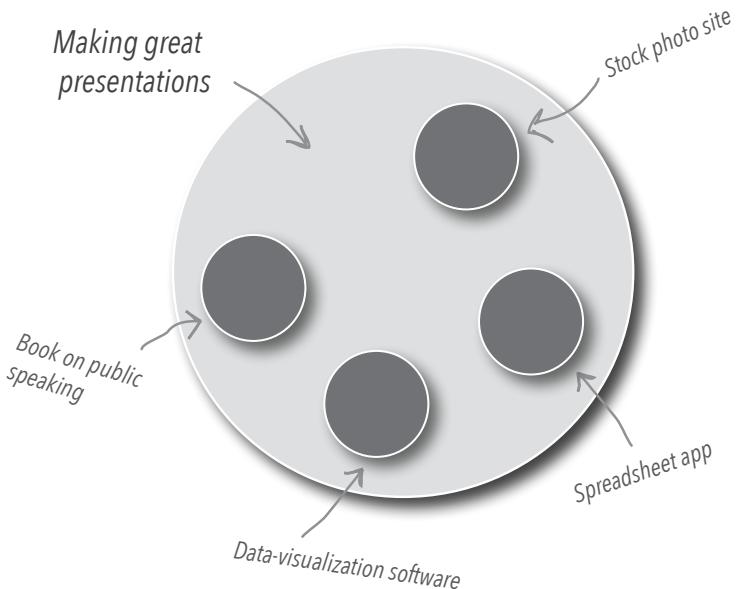
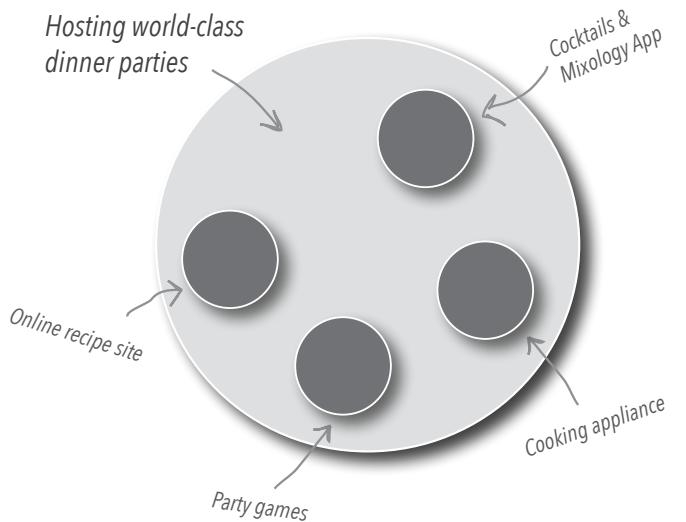
Most products and services support a bigger, compelling, motivating context.



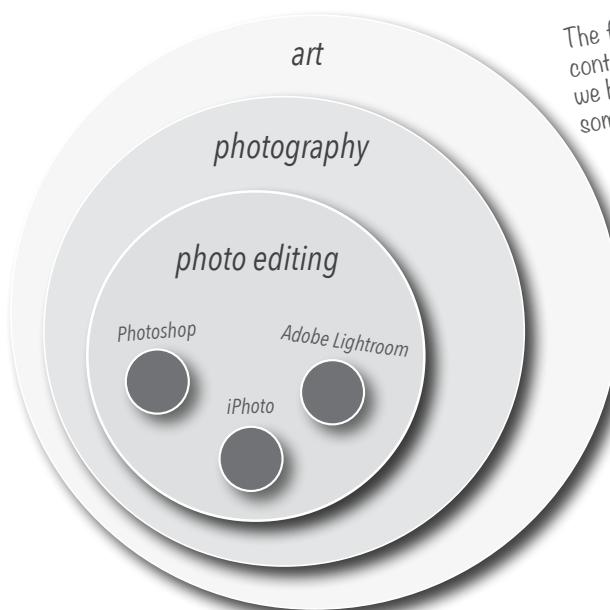
Tools matter. But being a *master of the tool* is rarely our user's ultimate goal. Most tools (products, services) enable and support the user's true—and more motivating—goal.

Nobody wants to be a *tripod master*. We want to use tripods to make amazing videos.

More Superset Examples

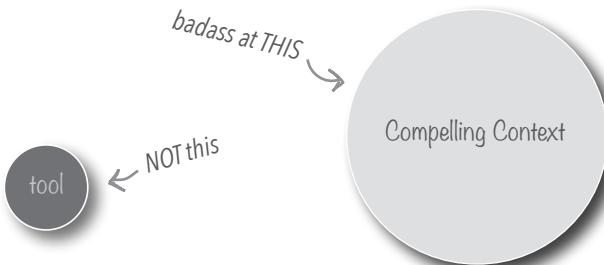


Contexts all the way out



The further we expand the context, the more possibilities we have for becoming badass at something this “tool” supports.

**People don't want to be badass at using our tool.
They want to be badass at what our tool helps them do.**

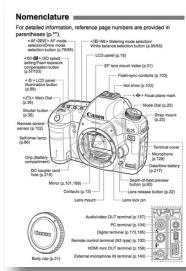


What's wrong here?

Before they give us money



After they give us money



Photography

Compelling Context

Camera

Good marketing focuses on what the potential user *really* wants to do. But *after they buy?* Every experience the user has with us shifts to *just the tool*.

Think about this.

If we want sustained, committed, badass users, we must fix this. After they give us money or join our service we should focus even more on what they really want to do.

The don't want to be badass at our *thing*.
They want to be badass at what they do with it.
They want badass results.

The Challenge

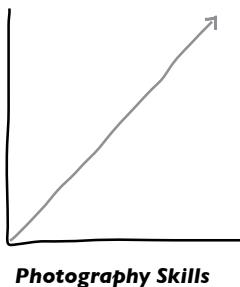
▶

Not cameras... *photography*



Some people have a passion for *cameras*, but most of us don't buy a camera to get a *camera*. We buy it to take *photos*.

**Appreciation
for higher-end
versions, add-ons,
upgrades, etc.**



And the deeper we get into *photography*, the more likely we are to recognize and appreciate the benefits of higher-end cameras.

In other words, it's the context—not the tool—that builds desirability for more/better tools.



Being better is Better

Being better means better *results*.

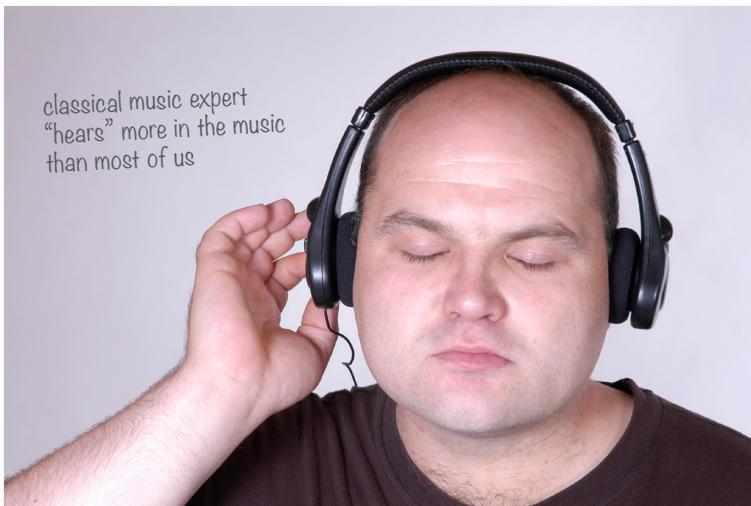
But being better is about more than just *results*. Being more skillful, more knowledgeable, more advanced is itself an intrinsically rewarding experience. The ability to make finer distinctions in what you can see, hear, taste, perceive in the environment can feel like a superpower.

When you're more skilled at something, it's as though a part of your world got an upgrade. It's as though pre-badass-you had been experiencing the world in *Standard* and now a part of the world has become ***High Resolution***.

Badass is about more than just results

Badass means higher resolution.

Badass means deeper, richer experiences.



The better you get at [x], the more *detail* you perceive in [x]. Greater detail is one of the most overlooked benefits of being better. To the human (and animal) brain, the ability to “pick-up” more from the environment is deeply rewarding.

While the ability to gain more resolution in *music* is an obvious benefit, having a higher-res experience of nearly *anything* makes that experience more pleasurable.

High-res is like a superpower



The wine sommelier smells and tastes more than most of us.



While most people see stars as the lights in the night sky, an astronomer sees a rich pattern of named stars and constellations.

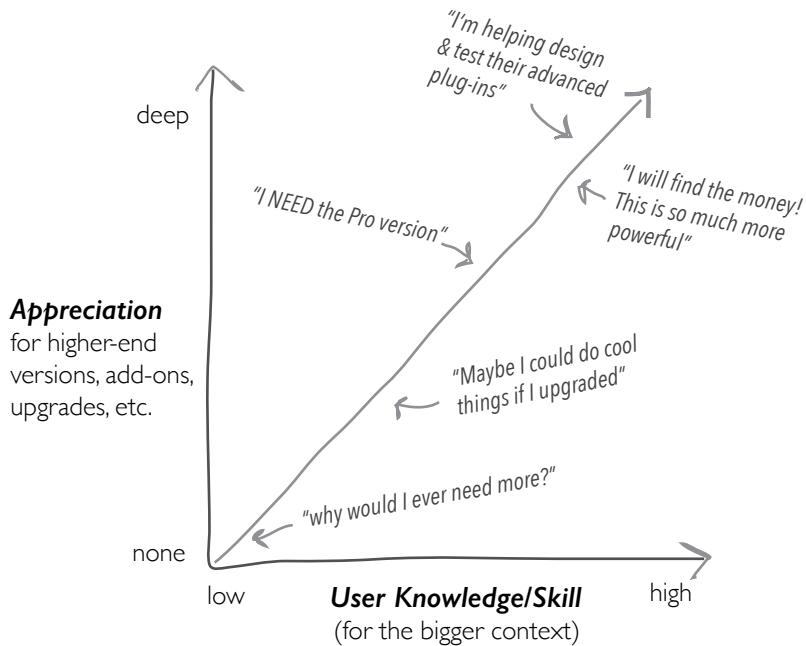


To those who don't know chess, it's just pieces arbitrarily placed on the board, but to a strong chess player, a glance at a good game in progress is filled with tension and intrigue.

(Side-effect: a good chess player watching a movie will notice if the chess game in the scene shows a "real" game, and they notice when the pieces aren't in the same place between shots.)

Higher resolution means higher-end products

The better you get at [x], the more *distinctions* you perceive in [x]. Enhanced perception means the ability to appreciate the value of higher-end and/or more advanced versions of products. An audiophile, for example, might perceive a substantial difference between two speaker systems, while a non-audiophile swears the speakers are identical.



**Don't just upgrade your product,
upgrade your users.**

**Another benefit of badass:
Badass users won't shut up**



Badass users *talk*. They're our best source of authentic, unincentivized word of mouth. The word of mouth our “formula” depends on.

But there's something even better than word of mouth...

**We want them to talk, but if they're badass...
they might not need to**

Did you see Roy's latest video?
The color is amazing.

He said he used a new
film-look app. I want it!



Badass users talk. They can't help it.
But sometimes they don't need to *talk* about
their amazing capabilities and results.

Sometimes it's *obvious*.

Word OF Obvious (WOFO)
is even better than
Word Of Mouth (WoM)

More badass means more business

We want word of mouth and word of obvious. We want our users to become better and better at the bigger context, and help encourage others to do the same.

How did you get that creamy, out-of-focus background? My camera can't do this.



Go to the Canon website and learn about aperture and depth of field.



Looks like I'll need a new camera and lens to do this.



The Challenge

▼ Prologue

But beware of faux-badass



Gamification awards for purchases, visits to a website, comments, etc. typically reward behavior the company wants, not what the user wants.

**It's not about helping people *feel* badass.
It's about helping them be badass.**

Have they gained new *higher resolution* at the bigger context they care about?

Are they now *more skilled* at the bigger context they care about?

Do they now *know more*, and can they use their new knowledge in ways they find useful or meaningful?

Are they getting better results?

Competing on Customer Service Excellence doesn't necessarily mean User Excellence

Business claim

What they mean

What customers want



“Fabulous Customer Service” sounds user-centered but it’s often just a company-centered focus *masquerading* as user-centered. No matter how pampered our users feel, if it doesn’t help them grow their skills, resolution, and results, it’s still *faux* badass. The role of customer service is to support and enable users to not just *feel* better, but to *be* better. Service plays a big role, but it’s not the star.

Competing on out-caring the competition is fragile unless “caring” means “caring about user results.”

Always be thinking: They’re people not puppies



“Feeling loved by a brand” does not mean badass. If we love *our* users more than the competition loves *theirs*, the proof doesn’t live in what we do, but in what *our* users do as a result.

The Better User POV:

**Don't just make a better [X],
make a better User of [X]**

**Don't make a better [camera],
make a better [photographer]**

**Don't make a better [power drill],
make a better [home DIY builder]**

**Don't make a better [our service],
make a better [user of our service]**

Your turn:

**Don't make a better [_____],
make a better [_____]**

your users (in the bigger context)

(You might have many different versions of this for different uses and/or market segments. If you're still figuring out your bigger context—the thing you'll help users become excellent at—then just pick something for now.)

Where we're at now:

Sustained desirability drives success.

Honest, non-bribed word of mouth drives desirability.

User badass drives word of mouth.

Badass not at the tool, but at what the tool enables.

Badass at the bigger context.

Badass means higher resolution.

Badass means user results.

(But not faux badass)

Don't make a better [x], make a better [user of X].



*And yet we **STILL** haven't
answered the **REAL** question...*

Which brings us yet again to... how?



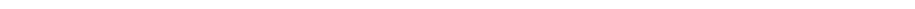
*How do you make users badass?
How do you help them want to be badass?
How do you get them to be users before they're badass?*

We're *almost there.*

The Challenge



Prologue ► **Think Badass**



“Point of view is worth 80 IQ points”

– Alan Kay

Point of view is also worth a big marketing budget, a pile of social media *Likes*, or a viral video.

Our POV:

***To create sustained success, create
high-resolution, badass users.***

Design for the Post-UX UX

UX

I can switch between shooting
stills and video with just one button



User Experience while
using the “tool”

Post-UX UX

Wow. The comments on
my video are inspiring.



User Experience after
using the “tool”.

The UX of results.

The Challenge

▼
Prologue ► Think Badass

All that matters is what happens when the clicking's done

When *our* results are tied to the results of our users, all that matters is what happens when the clicking, swiping, interacting, using is *done*.

What did that experience **enable**?

What can they now **do**?

What can they now **show others**?

What will they **say** to others?

How are they now more **powerful**?

What happens *after* the UX drives our success. It's what drives our users to talk about and recommend us, and it's what leaves our users so obviously better that they might not *need* to.

Thought Experiment: Post-UX documentary

Imagine one of your users gave a documentary camera crew full access to track them *after* they use your product or service.

What do they do in the next minutes, hours, days, weeks?

Who do they talk to? What do they say?



If a documentary crew followed one of your users, what would the camera see and hear?

They leave your site, store, or app. They put down your tool. What happens now?

Write a detailed description of what you see and hear, for the time-frame that makes sense for your bigger context.

You can do variations of this exercise for users at different levels from first-time newbie to expert. The key is to start thinking—**hard**—about what most products and services don’t: the *post-UX UX*.

The Challenge



Prologue ► **Think Badass**

Thought Experiment: User at a Dinner Party



How do you help your user be more interesting at a dinner party?

Designing for the post-UX UX means designing not just for *your* users but for *your users' users*.

It's not so much what our user thinks of us but what our user's friends, family, peers think of *our user*.

Imagine one of your users at a dinner party, and describe what you do (or *could* do) to help him be more interesting at that party. What have you given him to *talk* about (that isn't about *you*). What have you given him to *show*?

The Challenge

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Prologue ► **Think Badass**

Thought Experiment: Search And Replace

Imagine you're in a meeting brainstorming brand perception, and marketing. Now imagine that instead of asking questions about *your* brand, you try replacing "our" with "our users." It won't always make sense at first, but act as if it does.



The Challenge

▼
Prologue ► **Think Badass**

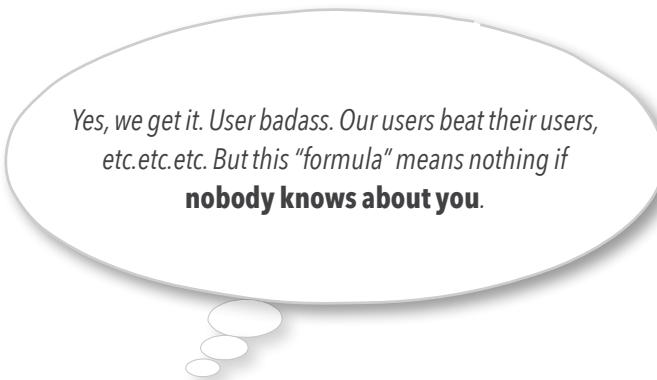
Thought Experiment: your users competing against *their* users

“Our users are better at this than *their* users”

Imagine that your competitive advantage is not how *you* compare to the competition but how your *users* compare to the competition’s *users*.

Imagine, for example, that instead of marketing based on *your* benchmarks, your marketing showed your *users’* benchmarks.

Describe or sketch an imaginary ad that shows your users outperforming your competition’s users at the bigger context:



*Yes, we get it. User badass. Our users beat their users, etc.etc.etc. But this "formula" means nothing if **nobody knows about you.***

Somebody has to be the first user. If our product or service is new, the goal is the same: create badass users. It *does* mean putting energy into getting at least a few initial users who are likely to become better *and* are in a context where others will know about it.

This does *not* mean getting an “influencer” to promote the new thing. Remember the search-and-replace exercise? Instead of asking “where do we *find* an influencer?” ask “how can we *create* an influencer from a person who is active in our target audience and most likely to benefit from becoming better?”

Later in the book we’ll look at techniques for helping those first users *recognize* they’re getting better, as early as possible, and increase the chance that others in the target audience will *hear about it*.

The best place to begin is to help a few people become *noticeably* better at the bigger context, and let word of mouth and word of *obvious* emerge as natural side effects.

The Challenge

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Prologue ► **Think Badass**

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