



a brief guide to world domination*

HOW TO LIVE A **REMARKABLE LIFE**
IN A CONVENTIONAL WORLD

**and other important goals*

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Layout by Reese Spykerman

Important: If you have access to a printer, please PRINT this report. You'll get a lot more out of it if you're not reading it from a monitor. Take it to your favorite coffee shop, read it at home in your comfortable chair, or bring it with you on the airplane the next time you travel.

There are a number of hyperlinks in the report that lead to more information online. Whenever you're at the computer you can follow each link to read more or check out a resource I recommend, but it's still better to read the report in printed form if you can.

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GREATNESS

If you want it badly enough, and are willing to make some changes in your life to cause it to happen, you too can take over the world... or do anything else you really want to do. Yes, you really can have it all. The only things you'll need to give up are assumptions, expectations, and the comfort zone that holds you back from greatness.

PART ONE

part one

*what you'll learn in
these 29 pages*

“Once in a while it really hits people that they don’t have to experience the world in the way they have been told to.”

-ALAN KEIGHTLEY

THIS IS A MANIFESTO THAT CAN LITERALLY HELP YOU TAKE OVER THE WORLD.

If you’ve ever wanted to invade a small country and become your own benevolent dictator, the next 29 pages will help you prepare to do exactly that.

If you have any other worthy ambitions, like starting your own business, becoming a successful artist, or something else, the report will also help with those goals.

You’ll also learn how your own personal goals can be directly related to helping other people. While you are pursuing your big ideas, you can also make a difference in the lives of others at the same time. I’ll tell you a few stories of ordinary people who have been doing this in very unique ways, and help you get started with your own plan of attack.

Who Should Read This Report

I should warn you now that this report is not for everyone. In fact, it’s probably not for most people. Instead of writing for the general public, I spent about 35 hours writing these pages for a small minority of people interested in living life on their own terms while making a dramatic, positive difference in the lives of others at the same time.

In short, I wrote it for people who are serious about ruling—or at least changing—the world.

How this remarkable minority will end up taking over the world varies considerably. Some are artists of all kinds, from painters to writers to musicians; others are entrepreneurs who have started businesses that radically shift the way we live our lives.

Some are professionals fighting to change the status quo in their industries, while others are involved in rewriting the rules in institutions especially known for being resistant to change, such as churches or universities. Still others are doing something completely different, perhaps something that’s never been done before.

It’s a lonely road for those of us who choose to be remarkable, and the path of convention can sometimes be appealing. That path is paved with safe lives, middle of the road monotony, and little chance of failure. But where’s the fun in being like everyone else out there?

By the way, this report is affiliate-link free. I have several recommendations for you here, but I won’t earn money or any other benefit from your taking action on

any of them. (Also, most of the recommendations are free.)

What You Need to Know First

I'd like to let you in on a big secret, right here at the beginning. Whether you go on to read the rest of this report or leave it behind and move on with the rest of your life, please remember one thing. Are you ready? Here it is:

You don't have to live your life the way other people expect you to.

I've put the best world domination instructions right here in the beginning, so pay attention to that statement. If you come to understand and apply it to the hundreds of choices you make every day, no one will be able to stop you from whatever it is you want to do.

If you want it badly enough, and are willing to make some changes in your life to cause it to happen, you too can take over the world... or do anything else you really want to do. Yes, you really can have it all. The only things you'll need to give up are assumptions, expectations, and the comfort zone that holds you back from greatness.

No matter what you have been told, no matter what has happened to you, and no matter what mistakes you've made, you can completely change the way you live every day of your life. You can focus the majority of your time on the things you enjoy, and you can also make an incredible difference in the lives of other people while you are at it.

In fact, they are counting on you to do exactly that.

What's the Catch?

If you're still with me, you may be wondering what the catch is. There always is one, right?

Well, not really. I'm not out to sell you anything, and this report is entirely non-commercial. However, I should warn you in advance: nothing is for sale here, but free ideas can have tremendous value.

Victor Hugo once said, "One can resist the invasion of an army but one cannot resist the invasion of ideas." After you use these ideas to take over the world, I'll show you a couple ways you can give back. But don't worry, you won't need to do that until you've invaded your first small country. Does that work for you?

A Quick Introduction

But wait—I'm probably getting ahead of myself. Who am I to tell you all this?

[You can read my whole story here](#), but the short version is that I have been self-employed for my entire adult life and have never had the dreaded "real job." I recently turned 30 years old, so I figured that since I've made it this far, there's no sense in looking for one of those real jobs now.

In 2006 I returned to the U.S. after spending four years as a volunteer in West Africa. During that time, I lived in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and six other African countries, helping to improve access to healthcare and clean water in the world's poorest places.

I worked with everyone from presidents to warlords, and learned a lot about unconventional living in the process. The four years I spent in Africa was by far the most rewarding experience I've ever had, and I only left it behind to enter a graduate program at the University of Washington in late 2006.

The conversation about world domination started earlier this year when I

was getting ready to finish my master's degree. A couple of friends asked me what I was going to do next, and at first I didn't know how to answer. I went through the list of "normal" responses to that question—maybe I'll start a new business, enter a Ph.D. program, go back to Africa, etc.

But after thinking about it for a long time, I started telling people, "I'm going to start my own social movement."

(Here's a quick side lesson: if you want to know who your real friends are, start telling your craziest idea to everyone you meet. Some people will slowly back away from you as if you really are crazy, but others will latch on to your idea and help you any way they can. The people in the second group are your real friends.)

My social movement is called *The Art of Nonconformity*, and I plan to take over the world. I won't take over the world by myself—many other independent-minded people will also be pursuing their own campaigns and changing the world in the way they see fit.

Oh, and I will also be traveling to every country in the world over the next five

years (I've been to 83 so far, but there are a lot more). In addition to the crusade against convention, my web site documents the progress toward this goal with blog posts from every country I go to. You can follow along or contribute your own ideas on the site through [email updates](#), [RSS](#), or just by checking back every couple of days.

THE BIG PICTURE

Yes, to truly take over the world, you'll need to consider the broader concerns of all humanity—not just your own life, and not just the lives of a few others close to you.

PART TWO

part two

*the unremarkable average
vs. the remarkable few*

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

-MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

OKAY, THAT'S ALL I HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ME. At the end of this report I'll tell you about my upcoming adventures around the world, but from here on out, the focus is on you.

In a moment, I'm going to ask you the two most important questions in the universe, but first let's look at how life works for most people. Here are a few ways that the average person lives out their life in our 21st century, Western world:

11 WAYS

to be
unremarkably
AVERAGE

1. Accept what people tell you at face value
2. Don't question authority
3. Go to college because you're supposed to, not because you want to learn something
4. Go overseas once or twice in your life, to somewhere safe like England
5. Don't try to learn another language; everyone else will eventually learn English
6. Think about starting your own business, but never do it
7. Think about writing a book, but never do it
8. Get the largest mortgage you qualify for and spend 30 years paying for it
9. Sit at a desk 40 hours a week for an average of 10 hours of productive work
10. Don't stand out or draw attention to yourself
11. Jump through hoops. Check off boxes.

[YOU CAN READ MORE ABOUT THIS HERE](#)

If that life sounds good to you, don't feel bad. You'll fit in just fine with the status quo, and no one will ever challenge you to be different. Conforming to the world's expectations is the safe, conventional path. You are far from alone.

However, I don't want to ask these important questions to the wrong person, so just to be fair to the minority of people who reject the path of convention, you should close this report now if you're comfortable with an unremarkably average life. I don't want to waste your time, and the rest of it won't really apply to most people anyway.

I'll give you the space on the rest of this page so that you can close the report without reading further. Thanks for your time! Have a great life.

The Two Most Important Questions in the Universe

Still there? OK, great. If the idea of an unremarkably average life sounds like a slow death by asphyxiation to you, you're on to something.

Don't panic; there is a clear alternative to the way most people amble through life with little focus or patience. It's not safe or easy, but if you want it badly enough, absolutely no one will be able to stop you from world domination or whatever it is you want to do.

I won't keep you waiting any longer. Here are the two most important questions in the universe:

#1: What do you really want to get out of life?

#2: What can you offer the world that no one else can?

We'll look at each question in some detail, but to get the full effect, take a few minutes and answer each of the questions according to your first instincts.

If you've printed this report, write your answers down in the space below. If not, write them in your journal, a legal pad, or a Starbucks napkin if that's where you are. It will be worth it.

Your First Answer:

Your Second Answer:

The First Question

OK... here we go.

#1: What do you really want to get out of life?

In other words, what's your ultimate goal? If you didn't have to do the things you currently have to do (work you don't

enjoy, all the things on the unremarkably average list, etc.), what *would* you do?

One of my marketing mentors, Paul Myers, has a great business newsletter that he has been writing for twelve years, which is basically forever in the online marketing world. His newsletter is free, and if you're interested in business, [you can sign up here.](#)

In addition to online marketing, Paul is a bit of a free spirit. Like me, he writes about more than just business. A while back, Paul came up with a great "Ideal World" exercise that helped me (and many others) answer the first question. [You can get a free copy of that exercise over here.](#)

The short summary is that you think through your idealized, perfect day in great detail, beginning from what time you get up and what you have for breakfast all the way through what you do for each hour of the day and who you talk to. Then you begin to make plans to adjust your life to get closer to the perfect day you've designed for yourself.

If you do nothing else, take this exercise seriously and you'll learn a lot about yourself. You may even begin making

more conscious decisions about how you spend your time and what you focus on. I do this exercise once a year in December and always end up making a lot of improvements the next year.

The Ideal World exercise is best completed when you are also thinking about your long-term goals. I keep a few ongoing lists of some of the things I want to accomplish in several periods of time, and you're welcome to use my system or modify it to suit your own needs:

1-YEAR GOALS — this list gets reviewed a few times a year, and I create next year's goals each December

5-YEAR GOALS — this list gets reviewed once a year

LIFETIME GOALS — this list gets reviewed once a year, and make sure to include some really big ideas for your lifetime goals

If you take the time to write out the description of your perfect day and then combine it with your long-term goals, you'll have a pretty good idea of what you really want to get out of life.

(Another side note: the fascinating thing about setting long-term goals is that once you get serious about planning for them, you may find that you fulfill them much faster than expected. This is because we tend to overestimate what we can complete in a single day, and underestimate what we can complete over longer periods of time.)

When you have a decent answer to the first question (you can always revise it later), you can move on to the second. And by the way, we're going to come back to the first question before the end of the report, so hold on to your answer.

The Second Question

The second of the two most important questions in the universe is:

#2: What can you offer the world that no one else can?

The real secret in life is that even though you can probably have anything you want if you work hard enough, in the end it's not all about you. You'll be able to achieve your own important goals, but to truly go to the next level, you'll need to do something great for the rest of the world as well.

This is because most people are not ultimately satisfied with a life that focuses entirely on themselves. Look at the recent trend of billionaires making deliberate choices to give away most of their money. From Bill Gates to Richard Branson to Warren Buffet, your average billionaire (if there is such a thing) spends a lot of time worrying about how they will change the world.

What are these guys thinking—haven't they already taken over the world by creating hugely successful businesses? Don't they know that the person who dies with the most toys wins?

It turns out that they're on to something. Bill Gates may lose out to Steve Jobs in the coolness department, but if the Gates Foundation can eradicate malaria in Africa, do you think the Nobel committee will award the prize to the creator of the MacBook Air?

I love my iPod as much as the next commuter, but every year more than one million children die of malaria.¹ That's one every 30 seconds—or six in the time it takes to listen to one song on my iPod. By all accounts, Bill Gates thinks about that a lot, and that's why he's walking

away from Microsoft this summer to focus on more pressing concerns.

Your own goals are crucially important, and you should NEVER listen to anyone who tells you to stop caring about them. (I'll show you later on what to do about critics and anyone else who says that you can't do something.)

But by themselves, money, fame, power, and even the pursuit of your own goals will only take you so far. To go further, you'll have to heed the words of the great Martin Luther King, Jr.:

"An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

Yes, to truly take over the world, you'll need to consider the broader concerns of all humanity—not just your own life, and not just the lives of a few others close to you. Dr. King placed the call in such broad terms for a good reason.

Billionaire or not, your relentless passion can do more than just help you take over the world for yourself. You can also use it to radically improve the lives of other people.

A Big Problem, and the Simple Answer

If you're still with me, you may have noticed something that is often perceived as a contradiction. For far too long, we have failed to recognize the importance of EACH of these mindsets together—doing what you really want, and radically helping others.

The problem is that in the prevailing logic of our modern age, these two perspectives have traditionally been viewed as opposites. You can do something good for yourself, or you can do something good for other people. You can make money, or you can change the world. Right?

But wait a second. Why can't you do something great for others while you are pursuing your own goals? And alternatively, why do you have to sacrifice your own goals while you are out changing the world for good?

You see, the conformists of the world will tell you to do one or the other, or else they'll tell you to go make money for a while and then use your resources to help people. This is a deceptively satisfying answer for people who want

to be reassured that it's okay to put off thinking about the second question.

It's a satisfying answer because it provides temporal relief. It's deceptive because it's not true, and over time most people gradually begin to correctly suspect that they've missed something big by believing this idea.

This is why you need to devote as much time as it takes to find out what you can offer the world that no one else can.

Answering the first question is usually easier, because when we finally get serious about it, most of us can quickly figure out what we really want to get out of life. Some people might know instinctively, while others might need a few hours or even a few weeks to mull it over.

But finding the answer to the second question typically takes much longer. It can be a long journey riddled with initial failures and false starts. But people are counting on you to continue, and in fact, it is the most important work each of us can do.

¹ Source: World Health Organization, "Call for urgent increased effort to roll back malaria," Geneva.

TRUE SUCCESS

Contrary to what you may hear from the latest self-help book, true success does not come from passive visualization or wishful thinking. It takes action, planning, and sacrifice. Like surfer-turned-songwriter Jack Johnson says in one of his coolest songs, "Don't let your dreams be dreams." Make them real.

PART THREE

part three

*the crowded world
and the way to break
through the noise*

Remember that it's far easier to stand back and criticize someone else than it is to put your own beliefs forward.

THE NEW YORK TIMES RECENTLY DID A STORY ON THE ALARMINGLY HIGH NOISE LEVELS IN CAIRO, EGYPT. Throughout the whole city of 17 million people, the average noise level for most of the day is 85 decibels, which is louder than the noise you hear standing 15 feet away from a passing freight train. Everyone in Cairo walks around shouting to each other during normal conversations and asking, "What? What?" over and over.

When I read this story, I thought about the phenomenon of globalization and the huge advancement of technology we have experienced in recent years. Many of us are continually online, getting bombarded with thousands of marketing messages and personal contacts every day. There is so much information on the Internet that it can be hard to wade through the constant barrage of useless information and get to something of value.

It makes you wonder if anything meaningful can break through the noise barrier. Like everyday conversations in Cairo, is the truth silenced?

Thankfully, there is an easy and gratifying answer to this question:

NO. Not at all. On the contrary, the world is desperately, impatiently waiting for you to figure out what you can give it.

Don't believe the hype about how crowded and noisy things are out there. When you finally come out with something truly worth caring about, people will notice.

Here are a few examples of very different people who have all found ways to be

relevant truth-tellers in a crowded marketplace.

Introducing Leo Babauta, Productivity Expert

In 2006, writer and government employee Leo Babauta started a small niche blog called [Zen Habits](#) devoted to productivity and lifestyle design. No big deal, at least at first. Leo wrote about the virtues of goal setting, exercise, getting things done, and related topics. He chronicled his own personal transformation, from out-of-shape smoker to vegetarian marathon runner.

While Leo kept posting quality content on a consistent schedule, a lot of people started paying attention. In the first year, he acquired 36,000 subscribers. He's now well over the 60,000 point and still

growing. All of these people feel like they know Leo, and look forward to his writing and personal stories.

Leo lives on the island of Guam, a place I've yet to visit, and has a large family (6 kids!) that he writes about from time to time on ZenHabits. Instead of pushing paper for the federal government, Leo now does what he wants to. He has the freedom that he's always longed for, and he spends a large part of his days writing blog posts and short essays that add tremendous value to his readers. I'm one of them, and I'm grateful.

Oh, and he also has a new book deal, significant advertising revenue for the site, and on January 16, 2008, Leo quit his day job. [He is now a full-time blogger.](#)

Introducing Randy Pausch, Carnegie Mellon University

Last September, Professor Randy Pausch gave an inspiring lecture to a small group of friends, family, and colleagues at the university where he had taught for ten years. Randy had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and did not expect to live much longer.

In his "last lecture," Randy provided a good mixture of humor and motivational content on the subject of "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams." You can view the [whole lecture here](#), or a [four-minute feature here](#).

Randy's ideas are very simple, and he has said that the lecture was primarily for his kids to have when they get older and he is not around. But at last count, at least ten million people have watched various forms of this talk, and Randy received a reported \$6.7 million dollars for the rights to a related book.

More than anything else, what this story illustrates to me is how desperate the world is for the simple truth. Nine months after the initial video spread all over the world, I was traveling through O'Hare airport and saw a clip being played on Fox News. Nine months later, the same clip!

I'm telling you, the world is in short supply of truth-tellers. If you can be an authentic one, enough people will listen.

Introducing Sam Thompson, Ultra Marathon Runner

Sam Thompson has been running for a long time, and he goes out for exercise a lot more than anyone I've ever heard of. After running the entire Appalachian Trail (2,000 miles!) a couple of years back, Sam decided he needed a "real" challenge.

With the goal of raising funds and awareness for Hurricane Katrina relief, Sam decided to run 50 marathons in all 50 states in 50 days. How's that for extreme goal setting?

(I said recently that I was proud of running 3 marathons in 2 states in 2 years. Sadly, it doesn't sound quite as impressive.)

Sam hit the road and went out running, over and over again. From city to city, day after day, with no time out for rest and recovery days like most long-distance runners have. On some days, he ran two marathons (52.4 miles, or about eight hours of running) due to scheduling conflicts with other states.

When he made it to Georgia, CNN came calling. [You can watch their interview](#)

[feature here](#), and notice how relaxed Sam looks despite having just run 40 marathons by that point. My favorite part of all the media coverage Sam received was when a sports doctor (the so-called resident expert) was later quoted on CNN.com saying that Sam's effort was "virtually impossible" and would cause "permanent damage" to his body.

I asked Sam just last week how he's doing. He told me that he is still running almost every day and is gearing up for another big expedition. So much for the safe opinion. Sam also told me that he raised thousands of dollars for Hurricane Katrina relief and got sponsored along the way.

When you combine what you are most passionate about with a focus on helping others, just like Sam did, you'll often end up exceeding your expectations for both efforts.

Here's a couple of other up-and-coming stories:

My friend [Scott Harrison](#) is a former New York City nightclub promoter who got tired of partying every night and decided to focus his energy on something more

substantial. He used to make a ton of money putting on parties for models and celebrities, and now he brings the same people together to raise money for local non-profit organizations in Africa and Asia.

I worked with Scott in Africa back in 2005, and I'm really impressed with how he's mobilized so many volunteers and resources for the worthy goal of bringing clean water to villages in poor countries that have not seen much benefit from governmental aid. [Go and watch this amazing video](#) from Scott's project in Kenya to see for yourself.

[Matt and Jessica Flanery](#) knew that many people don't give money to charity in part because they don't really know where their money goes. So, Matt and Jessica decided to fix it. Their amazing organization, [Kiva.org](#), has essentially democratized accountability for charities by linking up donors in rich countries with individual borrowers in poor countries.

Using Kiva's web site, you can read about local entrepreneurs all over the world and issue your own micro-loan to the ones you are impressed by. So far, Kiva has facilitated 43,000 loans in 42 coun-

tries for a total of \$30 million dollars that has changed hands—and the repayment rate is an amazing 99.72%. Keep an eye on them, because they represent the future of charity and micro-lending.



THESE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES. I'll be profiling other modern day change agents, along with interviews and their own take on non-conformity, every month on my site.

All of these people from incredibly different backgrounds have one thing in common: either a relentless commitment to do something no one else has ever done, or a new way of presenting ideas that improve our lives. They all chose to look at the world in a different way, and then they chose to take action where others only dreamed about it.

But wait.... what about the first question and our own personal goals?

If you really want the x amount of money you think you need, the [large vehicle to go off-roading](#) at the mall, or anything else, the world will probably let you have it. There's enough to go around.

You can be a for-profit change agent too, and there's nothing wrong with that. Entrepreneurs and artists of all types should be rewarded for their work, and if you add value to the universe, you deserve to be paid for it.

BUT—then the world will be waiting impatiently for you to give back. Our lives are connected with others all over the world, and as Richard Branson and Bill Gates have discovered, the most fulfilling lives focus outwardly in the end. This has never been truer, and each of us has an obligation to consider how our own goals can intersect with a shared responsibility for other people.

Besides, no one has ever been self-taught.

No matter how independent they are, I've yet to meet someone who has accomplished everything in their life completely on their own. It just doesn't work that way.

When I was a kid, my dad took me to bookstores a couple of times a month and let me buy at least four books each trip, even though we didn't have much money. I was probably the only 10-year old reading *Cantonese in 30 Easy Les-*

sons and books by Nietzsche and all kinds of random topics. But my Dad never discouraged me or said I shouldn't read something. He just said, "Looks interesting" and paid for my books.

I wasn't able to master Cantonese, but I did become fascinated with learning, and those experiences at the bookstore are still helping me as I begin my writing career twenty years later. Even if you didn't have a good experience with learning like I did, or if something else happened to trip you up somewhere, you can probably remember a lot of people who helped you become who you are now.

The way you fulfill your obligation to the people who helped you is by doing the great stuff you've always dreamed about, while helping others go even further at the same time.

The Vision to Rule—and Change—the World

Here is the summary of everything we've covered so far:

Instead of one or the other, when you set significant goals for yourself while focusing on improving the state of the world (all humanity, to use Dr. King's phrasing), that's when you'll find yourself on the path of world domination.

The answers to the two important questions (*What do you really want to get out of life?* and *What can you offer the world that no one else can?*) will help you understand more about your quest for ultimate life fulfillment. It is that serious, and that important.

Have you ever thought about doing something differently than you do now? Ever thought about starting a business, a blog, a web site, a marathon training program, an overseas trip... or something else entirely? How about changing careers, learning a language, moving somewhere completely different?

If those examples don't fit, then think about what makes sense for you. Most of us have dreams of distant things we'd like to do one day, and one thing I have observed in years of questioning expectations is that there is a big difference between dreams and goals.

A lot of people simply do not expect their dreams to ever come true. The funny-but-sad thing is that as long as they believe that, they are absolutely correct. Contrary to what you may hear from the latest self-help book, true success does not come from passive visualization or wishful thinking. It takes action, planning, and sacrifice. Like surfer-turned-songwriter Jack Johnson says in one of his coolest songs, “Don’t let your dreams be dreams.” Make them real.

Challenges You’ll Face Along the Way

Before we go on to your plan of attack, I have to warn you about a few obstacles that will try to prevent you from ruling or changing the world.

I wish I could say that all of this will be easy, but there’s a good reason why the path of unconventional living is less traveled. On the journey of becoming yourself (the real you) and changing the world in the way you see fit, you’re going to encounter some real opposition along the way.

There are people who will stop at nothing to stand in your way, as well as other

obstacles that you need to be aware of right from the start. The opposition you face will come in many different forms, but the most common are gatekeepers, critics, and the widespread acceptance of mediocrity.

These are not small problems, and many world-changers end up backing down before they achieve their goals because of the significant challenges. I don’t want that to happen to you, so pay close attention to this section.

GATEKEEPERS

Gatekeepers exist in most industries, but their purpose is always the same: to control or withhold the flow of information and the ability to create change. They act as old-school security guards on innovation, trying to block outsiders from infiltrating their ranks or changing the system.

If you don’t follow the rules they set, gatekeepers get worried because they are threatened by change or any challenge to their authority. To be accepted in their hierarchy, gatekeepers usually expect you to have some or all of the following:

- *Degrees or certificates from the same schools that they went to*
- *Lots of experience (but only in fields that they approve of)*
- *Apprenticeships*
- *Respect for elders*
- *A steady progression through the ranks (no skipping ahead!)*
- *Most importantly, a willingness to accept the rules of the system so that it can continue enriching the gatekeepers.*

Most of the people who will read this report live in societies where gatekeepers are common, and examples are easy to find. Lawyers, art galleries, record labels, newscasters, political parties, labor unions, certification boards—these are all professional gatekeepers. They consider their jobs to be either a) telling you what to think, b) telling you what to do, c) telling you which choices you have, or d) all of the above.

The bad news for gatekeepers is that information and power is becoming increasingly democratized. It’s not so easy for them anymore. In many industries, gatekeepers are on the verge of irrelevancy, and they are in panic mode as they slowly begin to realize it.

Last year, the band Radiohead decided to release their new album, *In Rainbows*, directly on the internet for free. Anyone who wanted to could go to their web site and download it without providing any payment info. If the listeners liked the music, the band encouraged them to send in the payment that the listeners thought was fair.

The record companies didn't like this idea from the beginning, and they liked it even less when Radiohead made at least \$10 million dollars in the first week from the "free" download.²

The mainstream media outlets, especially TV and newspapers, are the archetypal gatekeepers of what we as citizens are expected to pay attention to. For years, viewers and readers were simply told what was newsworthy, without having the chance to vote on it or share their own opinions. When the nightly broadcast came on at 6:00 and 10:00 every evening, hundreds of millions of people would sit in front of the screen and watch "the

news" presented in a hierarchical fashion based on what a small group of media barons and editors thought was important for us to hear.

Unfortunately for the media barons, but fortunately for the rest of us, this is no longer the case. Consumers, at least the hyperactive ones, are defining the news more and more as ratings for traditional news outlets plummet every year. Look at the rise of new, user-generated media outlets like Digg, StumbleUpon, Del. Icio.U.s, and the other social networking communities. No, not everyone uses them—but more and more people do all the time, and the point is that there is now a choice.

(By the way, if you are part of a social network and think this report is worthy of wider attention, please submit or vote for it. It will mean a lot to me.)

The recent democratization of world-changing doesn't mean you can ignore gatekeepers—you still have to be well aware of the ones you'll encounter as you pursue your goals. That way, you can defeat or bypass them and make the way easier for others in the future.

CRITICS

In addition to gatekeepers, chances are you'll also encounter a number of people who are just downright negative about your plans to take over the world. These people are expert pessimists, and they are not usually critical of just a few people. Instead, they tend to be critical of anyone who thinks differently than they do.

So that you know how to recognize a critic when you meet one, here are a few distinguishing characteristics:

- *Critics will give you all kinds of good reasons why you "can't" do what you want to do.*
- *Critics will say that you should give up and do something safe and expected. ("Get a real job. You'll never make a living as a _____.")*
- *Without being prompted, critics will tell you everything they think is wrong about your ideas, and if they can't find something, they'll make it up.*
- *When you ask a critic for their opinion about something (a book they recently read, a movie they saw, a new restaurant,*

life in general, or pretty much anything), they will usually begin by telling you all the things they didn't like about it. If they liked something, it will probably come as an afterthought.

When you do actually achieve your hard-earned success, the same people who said it was impossible will then say that it wasn't that important anyway. It can be maddening if you let it get to you, which is why you can't allow that to happen.

Critics are not happy people by nature, but they seemingly enjoy putting other people down. [You need a strategy to deal with them](#), but in the end, don't give up. You're not working for them, and critics will never change the world.

Lastly, remember that it's far easier to stand back and criticize someone else than it is to put your own beliefs forward. The critics know this, so that's why they stay in the corner and complain about anyone who steps out.

THE NORMALIZATION OF MEDIOCRITY

In my quest to visit every country in the world, I do a lot of flying. Ironically, I don't usually mind going on ten-hour red-eye flights to Asia or the Middle East,

but I rarely look forward to flying anywhere in America these days.

I've recently started to believe that virtually all the U.S. airlines have effectively abdicated their duties to take care of their passengers—the same people who keep the airlines in operation. Strangely enough, the flying public has accepted this abdication for the most part. In the airline industry, [mediocrity has become the new “good enough.”](#) If you fly anywhere in America these days, you probably know all about this, because mediocrity is what you hope for on the average U.S. flight.

You hope that your flight is not terribly late and that they don't lose your luggage. You hope that the passenger in front of you won't recline her seat, because the airlines have crammed in so many rows that you feel squished even without the seat in front coming back against your knees.

You probably don't even consider the hope that your flight will be comfortable, that you'll have decent leg room, or that you'll get a nice meal—because the public has come to accept that airlines no

longer have the responsibility to provide any standard of comfort to travelers.

The same standard is increasingly true in other industries. Instead of embracing innovation and strong user experiences as common values, in many cases the only thing we strive for is the standard of “not bad” or “good enough.”

Something has gone terribly wrong. We have forgotten how to complain about the right things, and started bitching about everything else.

If there is any good news to the normalization of mediocrity, it's that when you do something excellent, it will be so uncommon that you will instantly stand out. People will be amazed, because they're so used to the good enough that the excellent is truly rare. This can work to your advantage when you decide to take things up a level and exceed the low expectations around you.

² Source: [Mashable.com](#) (October 19, 2007)

EXPERTISE

When you take the time to become a real expert in something highly specialized that really adds value to the world, the people you help will start looking to you for answers about seemingly unrelated topics. It's always better to start highly focused and then work outwards than to begin with a broad, unspecific mandate.

PART FOUR

part four

*the plan of attack
and how to overcome
the challenges*

The truth is that if you want to achieve your most significant goals, and you want to change the world for the better in the process, you really don't need to jump through all the hoops that people hold up for you.

SO FAR WE'VE COVERED THE MOST IMPORTANT SECRET OF WORLD DOMINATION (“You don't have to live your life the way other people expect you to”), looked at the two most important questions in the universe, checked out a few examples of other world-changers, and reviewed the challenges you'll face along the way.

You're almost ready. But wait...

Before you head off to storm the castle (“First we take Manhattan,” as a reader said on my site recently), you'll need a plan of attack and a few important tools.

Future leaders and changers of the world, I present to you the toolkit for world domination. Please do your best to use these powers for the good of us all.

The Toolkit for World Domination **RELENTLESS PASSION**

By far the most important thing you need in the toolkit is an intense passion for your cause that can not be hindered by critics or your own shortcomings. You have to be willing to give it your all, and for a long time with potentially few rewards. In the short run, few people will notice, but in the long run, everyone will. Or at least, everyone you need to influence in your campaign will notice.

A VERY SPECIFIC GOAL

What sets you apart? Where will your tipping point be? What will the world look like with you in charge? You can also call this your elevator pitch. If you had two minutes with anyone in the world who has the power to influence the rest of your life, what would you say to them? “Hi, my name is _____ and I'm going to _____.”

In the modern-day classic *Good To Great*, Jim Collins tells the story of his wife deciding to compete in the 1985 Ironman race. One day she looks up at the breakfast table and says, “I think if I give up everything else—grad school offers, the full-time job, most of my other hobbies—I can actually win the Ironman.” Just like that. And then she makes it her very specific goal, devotes every day for three years to achieving it, and comes in first place despite a severe hamstring injury that caused her a lot of pain on the 26.2 mile run.

A COMPELLING STORY

I went to West Africa in 2002 because I heard the story of how a hospital ship needed volunteers to come work in desperate countries like Sierra Leone. It was a compelling story that profoundly affected my life, and my wife and I made

a two-year commitment to work for free without even visiting first.

In the context of this report, let's look at some the examples we covered earlier:

- Ultrarunner Sam Thompson runs 50 marathons in 50 states in 50 days to raise money and awareness for disaster relief
- Prolific professor Randy Pausch gives his “Last Lecture” on achieving childhood dreams before dying
- Government bureaucrat Leo Babauta changes his life and starts an insanely popular personal development blog
- Social entrepreneur Chris Guillebeau travels to every country in the world and profiles other nonconformists

(By the way, what do you think of my story? Is it interesting enough? Is it compelling to you?)

EXPERT STATUS IN SKILLS THAT HELP OTHERS

As we've seen here, you can't just take over the world for yourself. You have to add value to others, or no one will want to help you. Therefore, you need to have skills that will radically improve the lives

of others. Does your world domination plan have an educational component?

Here is the interesting thing about this: when you take the time to become a real expert in something highly specialized that really adds value to the world, the people you help will start looking to you for answers about seemingly unrelated topics. It's always better to start highly focused and then work outwards than to begin with a broad, unspecific mandate.

A SMALL ARMY

You need to recruit [a small army of committed believers](#) who will support your cause and add their own resources in support of it. How many people do you need? Well, obviously it varies, but [1,000 true fans](#) is a great start. In fact, a small, devoted army is far better than a large, uncommitted mob.

FRIENDS OF FRIENDS

A small army is critical, but in the long run, the friends of your friends may end up helping even more. This is because of the phenomenon called “the strength of weak ties.” In 1973, sociologist Mark Granovetter published a [controversial article](#) claiming that “weak ties,” or friends of friends, are responsible for the majority of new jobs and opportunities we

encounter. This claim runs contradictory to the classical understanding of efficient markets, and Granovetter even showed how most new information we acquire in our daily lives comes from extended social networks.

ENOUGH MONEY

Your goal will probably require some amount of money. How much do you need? Simply put, you need enough money to accomplish the goal—no more, no less. Figure out what the true cost is and then figure out how to get it. Work the math out backwards.

For example, on a train ride between Slovakia and Hungary a couple of years ago, I figured out that the cost of visiting 100 countries would be roughly equal to that of buying a new S.U.V. When I saw how relatively little that was, I felt encouraged. I gave up the hypothetical large vehicle and received the world in return.

ENOUGH TIME

You have to be able to devote significant time to improving your skills. You don't just want to be good enough; you want to be remarkable. What this means is different for everyone--some people are able to pursue world domination in their off hours, while others will need more time.

When he was a real lawyer and before he started writing the same book every year, John Grisham got up at 4:00 a.m. every day to work on his first two novels. This strategy doesn't work for everyone, however, because many people find that their 9-5 commitment steals their best energy from them. In these cases, you'll need to make some major adjustments or even [quit your job](#).

Regardless of which side you fit in, you'll need enough time. As the online poet [Robert Bruce](#) eloquently puts it, "You'll never crush your own mediocrity working only four hours a week."

ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION

Yes, social networking is here to stay, but you also need some kind of pulpit. You need to be able to speak to your army directly. This can be done through a web site, a blog, a newsletter, an email list, a phone broadcast, or something else.

IMPORTANT:

What's NOT on the List

The above list may not be fully complete—be sure and tell me if I've missed something—however, I can tell you with certainty that there are a few things some people will expect from you that are completely unnecessary.

This list of ignorable expectations includes:

- *Qualifications*
- *Introductions*
- *Endorsements*
- *Everything the gatekeepers expect from you*

These are all the things you DON'T NEED.

I'm probably going to make some people angry with that sentence, but my first obligation in this report is to present the truth. And the truth is that if you want to achieve your most significant goals, and you want to change the world for the better in the process, you really don't need to jump through all the hoops that people hold up for you.

In the old days, you had to keep checking boxes and ticking tasks off the expectations list for a long time before anyone would listen to you. But guess what? Life is different now. You are your own guru.

You can set up shop tomorrow and call yourself an expert on whatever subject you want. Who's to say you aren't one?

The gatekeepers aren't in charge anymore, and if you have something of merit to bring to the table, the public can now judge it directly.

The Plan of Attack, and the Ready-Fire-Aim Method

I use mind maps and the fantastic [GTD method from David Allen](#) to plan out all of my projects, both business and personal ones. You can [read more about this here](#), but the summary is that you brainstorm the final outcome of your goal (publish book, run marathon, invade Panama, etc.) and then work backwards from the goal to determine everything that needs to happen for the outcome to arrive on schedule.

The tasks you write down should be small and detailed, and for large projects you will have many different tasks. Using these strategies, the answers to the two questions, and the toolkit for world domination, you can figure out exactly how to get started on your own campaign.

By the way, planning is great, but when it comes to acting, I prefer the ready-fire-aim method, and I prefer to start sooner rather than later. You can always make

changes later on, but if you never begin, you'll never know what could have happened if you tried.

For example, I sometimes hear from people who want to know which foreign language they should study in high school, in university, or just on their own as an independent learner. The decision is usually stressful for them. "What if I make the wrong choice?" they ask, as if they are afraid they will be behind everyone else for the rest of their lives by choosing the "wrong" language.

My response is that it doesn't really matter which language you choose, as long as you get started with one of them. If you start with Spanish, you can always switch to French, Italian, or Portuguese later. Everything that you learned will still be relevant. Even if you choose to study a language that's more difficult for English speakers, such as Arabic or Chinese, the skill you acquired in learning an easier language will help you with the more difficult one.

In other words, the choice doesn't matter—just do something.

This strategy applies to far more than just language learning. Here's a quick tip that will help you make progress right away, with any project on your wish list: when you finish this report, make a list of at least three things you can do that will bring you closer to achieving your significant goals. Without waiting too long, go out and do them, and then add three more tasks to the list.

What I'm Doing: Every Country in the World, and the Crusade Against Convention

Before we wrap this up, I promised a few pages back to tell you a little about my own plans. I've been fortunate to have done a lot of traveling over the past few years, mostly to Africa and other places in the developing world. In 2007 I visited 26 countries, and I'm on track to go to at least as many this year.

In fact, over the next five years, I plan to achieve my personal goal to visit every country in the world. Before the end of 2008, new countries that are on my itinerary include Pakistan, Brunei, Swaziland, Latvia and Mongolia—not exactly your typical vacation spots, although I hear that Latvia can be nice.³

On all of these trips, I'll be documenting the journey on my web site through weekly essays about Life, Work, and Travel. It's not easy to go to every country in the world, and the few people who have done it are typically much older than me. I may succeed, I may fail—but I've committed to documenting the entire process for you, win or lose.

THE CRUSADE ON CONVENTION

While pursuing my own goal of world travel, I plan to be a catalyst for the crusade against mediocrity and conventional beliefs. My social movement is called *The Art of Nonconformity*, and while my personal goals have a lot to do with my own life (obviously), the writing on my site is for everyone who seeks to follow their own path of world domination.

I'm not that particular about the means that you use, or what your specific plans include. I'm not the guru, remember? You are. Just remember the wise words of Uncle Ben from Spiderman: "With great power comes great responsibility."

Each month I'll be profiling others who take their own paths to greatness through service to others—people like Leo, Randy, Sam, and others. I hope the

inspiration helps you with the pursuit of your own goals.

Before the end of the year, I plan to have finished most of the content for my first book that will expand these ideas further. I haven't written much more than the outline yet, but I include the stated goal here because I figure if I have a few thousand people holding me accountable, the odds are greater that it will actually get done.

Come and Join Me?

Lastly, I'm recruiting my own small army, and I would love to have you in the ranks. Enlistment is easy, nothing is for sale, and you can be released anytime. All you have to do is [be remarkable](#), and you are your own judge of that.

You can follow my world journeys, as well as the crusade on convention, via your favorite [RSS reader](#) or by [email subscription](#).

The Wrap-Up: Live from Singapore Airlines

We're almost done, but let me tell you one final story before we close things down and get ready to storm the castle.

A couple months ago I was on a flight from Los Angeles to Tokyo. Thanks to a free ticket from my many Frequent Flyer miles, I was seated in Singapore Airlines' nice Business Class cabin. Singapore is frequently voted the best airline in the world for premium travelers, and tickets on the LAX-Tokyo route sell every day for \$5,000 and up. There I was, a graduate student without a job, drinking champagne and placing my order for the five-course meal. Life is crazy that way.

On the flight I got to talking with Jon, my seatmate. Jon was an electrical engineer from Colorado. "You know," he said, "I don't meet many students who fly Business Class to Tokyo just for the fun of it."

I thought about Jon's comment for a few seconds. It's true, I'm living an amazing life. I try to be grateful for it every day.

But it's also true that I do what I want because I've made deliberate choices to structure my life to pursue the things I want to do.

"Well," I finally said to Jon, "I believe in doing exactly what I want. And besides,

those Economy seats back there are a little cramped for an 11-hour flight."

Jon laughed as the flight attendant brought us more champagne.

A few days later I was in Mumbai, India, and I went to visit a part of town called Dharavi. This neighborhood is sometimes known as Asia's largest slum, and while I don't really like that description, it helps you get the idea. With a guide who lived in Dharavi and a few other visitors, I spent the afternoon walking around two square kilometers that serve as the living and working quarters for more than 1.2 million people.

I don't want you to have the wrong impression—the situation was not dismal at all, and it was encouraging to meet several local entrepreneurs who were building impressive small businesses out of recycling plastic. But it was certainly worlds apart from the Singapore Airlines flight I came in on.

During both of these encounters I kept thinking about the two questions as applied to my own life:

What do I really want?

What can I really offer?

The life I have chosen, and the life that awaits you, is the opposite of fate. Did you ever read a Choose Your Own Adventure book?⁴ Life is like that. It's waiting for you to decide whether you'll be average or remarkable.

What will you make of it?

It's your turn now.

And now, introducing... YOU

What will you do with this message? It's up to you.

If they didn't stop reading at the unremarkably average section, most people reading this report will shrug it off. Is that you?

How will you take over the world? What's your story? It's your turn.

Please do me one favor: if this report has meant anything to you, come over and post a short comment on my site. I'd really appreciate it.

If you have your own two answers already, come and share them with everyone else who has been reading. You can be anonymous if you want, and if you don't have the answers yet and are still working it out, that's OK too.

Post your feedback here:

<http://ChrisGuillebeau.com/manifesto>

or write to 3x5@chrisguillebeau.com

Thanks again for taking the time to pay attention to my manifesto in the midst of a crowded and noisy world. I'm tremendously grateful.

Be the change,
Chris

³ *A lot of people ask, "How many countries are there?" Naturally, there's a debate over this question, but the list I've chosen has 198. At the time of this writing, I've been to 81 so far. Read more here: <http://chrisguillebeau.com/3x5/places>*

⁴ *If you're not familiar with these books, the basic premise is that you read a few pages and are then presented with a choice. Depending on which choice you make, you turn to a different page later on and the story evolves as you go.*

Acknowledgements and Resources

Acknowledgements

Thanks first of all to my amazing readers. I rely on your feedback and think about you every day wherever I am in the world. Thanks especially to those of you who have commented on the site or written in with your feedback.

Thanks to my friend [Reese Spykerman](#) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, who did the graphic design for this report. Reese and her husband Jason do great design and programming work. If you want a blog for your business, some SEO help, or any custom design job, you should hire them and pay them a lot of money.

A Few Resources

I believe in reading as widely as possible, and I think that the most important work each of us can do every day is to learn. I originally planned to include a few of my favorite books, magazines, and reports here... but then I realized that I have a lot of them, and I also find new inspiration all the time.

So instead, I'm keeping a few pages for you online, and I'll update them from time to time at this page:

<http://ChrisGuillebeau.com/inspiration>

Check it out sometime; all of the links are affiliate-free.

Final Thoughts

P.S. No matter what else you do, please remember two things:

1) You don't have to live your life the way other people expect you to.

2) The world is waiting for you to figure out what only you can contribute. Take as much time as you need to find the answer, and then get started on it.