

# Digitize the Soul of Your Business

*“Your income is directly related to your philosophy, NOT the economy.” - Jim Rohn*

As the web evolves, it's only natural for web use to become less mechanical. Marketing tactics such as search engine optimization, social media distribution, email capture and sales funnels will lose their current glitz and glamour, and take their place alongside all the other marketer's tools. Much like swinging a hammer is a mundane necessity for carpenters, likewise the tactics of marketing your business online will seem mundane as well.

In many ways, this has already begun with the move away from the long, adjective-laden, yellow-highlighter-riddled sales pages that once passed as "online business." These digital used-car salesman tactics have been replaced with personalized messaging, engagement marketing, and storytelling.

Winning brands are focused on starting conversations with their audience, and reject the traditional alternative of buying audience attention.

Winning brands value customer experience over a slick sales funnel, and the cadence of an authentic human voice over legally-approved corporate jargon.

Our goal today is connection.

Consumers embrace the occasional miscue, and celebrate the raw nature of personalities such as Gary Vaynerchuk, (author of *Crush It* and *Jab, Jab, Jab, Right Hook*). In his own words, Gary explains, "I attract a crowd, not because I'm an extrovert or I'm over the top or I'm oozing with charisma. It's because I care."

I would take Gary Vaynerchuk's example even further. He attracts a crowd because he's built a brand with a soul.

Gary has digitized the soul of his business, and that soul flows through every piece of content he creates. In every YouTube video, podcast interview and live presentation Gary drips a little more of himself onto the audience, and they eat it up. He's a real person, with real passions, desires and goals for his business (like owning the Jets), and he shares these dreams right alongside tales of his personal struggles as a workaholic.

Gary shares authentic, transparent, honest guidance as often as he possibly can. His raw style provides the audience (potential clients/customers) with an open window to the beliefs, culture and style that act as the foundation for his VaynerMedia and Gary Vaynerchuk brands.

During live presentations, such as his famous "Inc 500" speech, listeners assume Gary Vaynerchuk will drop the "F-bomb" frequently. Most presenters couldn't pull off such language. But Gary incorporates profanity with panache. His stream of obscenities serves a purpose. Gary's provocative language acts as a filter to potential clients and customers who wouldn't be good fits for his business.

In addition to acting as a filter, Gary's in-your-face language and raw guidance have built an almost cult-like following. Believers in Gary Vayberchuk's style and message wear their support like a badge of honor, similar to the way die-hard sports fans rock their favorite player's jersey to a dinner party.

This is the relationship Connected Generation consumers want to experience with the brands they do business with: By digitizing the soul of his business and sharing his raw message through digital and social media, Gary is at once filtering out "Bad Fit" clients and enamoring himself to true believers.

Person by person, one at a time, we build our audience of true believers. Here's the catch: we must do this with complete disregard for immediate results. I'm not

saying results cannot or should not happen quickly. But the concept of digitizing the soul of your business is a long-game play. If this were the NFL, we'd be establishing the run. If this were a Malcolm Gladwell book, we'd talking about the first 10,000 hours.

Sure, there are ways to expedite this process. I'm a particularly big fan of the concept known as "Growth Hacking" (we talk in more detail about Growth Hacking in Section III). Though there are specific tactics associated with Growth Hacking, in its purest form Growth Hacking is more a mindset than a tactic. Most relevant to our discussion in this book is the concept of taking an idea and getting it in front of your Product Market Fit (PMF), the group of people who relate completely to the product offered.

PMF is a simple and sound concept that, at face value, almost sounds easy. But how do you know who your Product Market Fit is, what they look like and what they want, if you don't first understand the soul of your own business? I'm talking about the Simon Sinek "Why" of what you're doing. The Product Market Fit isn't going to be sold on the functionality of your product or service alone. Above all else, your Product Marketing Fit wants to believe in you and your business.

On the Rogers Innovation Curve, we're talking about the first 2.5 percent of people who will ultimately buy from you. Known as the "Innovators," these are the people who are so in tune with what you're doing they simply do not have any other choice than to buy. You, your business, and your product provide an outlet for their self-expression.

The emotional connection produced by the Product Market Fit can't be captured in features or characteristics. The natural desire your PMF audience feels for your product comes from someplace deeper. They feel it in their guts. That feeling drives both their commitment to your business and a willingness to share their experience.

Doesn't a discount make consumers want to share their experience? Shouldn't amazing features make consumers want to share their experience? Couldn't fantastic customer service make consumers want to share their experience?

Maybe. But deep down, the decision to buy is emotion-driven. In his book *Descartes' Error*, Antonio Damasio, professor of neuroscience at the University of Southern California, argues that emotion is a necessary ingredient to almost all decisions. MRI neuro-imagery shows that, when evaluating brands, consumers primarily use the portions of their brains responsible for emotion versus the portions controlling logic-based thought. Furthermore, according to a study done by Advertising Research Foundation, the emotions determining "Likeability" were the most predictive as to whether or not a brand's advertising campaign would be successful.

Why else would the PMF person stand in line outside the Apple store for days, just to purchase the next generation iPhone? The features aren't so much better than what was previously available. In many ways, the Samsung Galaxy S4 and Android Nexus 5 have more appealing features. There certainly isn't any discount in price. Consumers who wait in those lines pay the highest price the new iPhone will ever cost. Not to mention that the purchasing experience of standing in the weather surrounded by strangers is NOT pleasant, to say the least.

But they do it.

They do it again and again and again, for each new version of Apple's iPhone. These people connect with the soul of Apple, just like every PMF consumer does with the product or service they MUST have. The product matches their desires, their core beliefs. It shows the world who they want to be and how they want to be seen.

For more than a decade, Apple has continued to attract a huge Product Market Fit consumer audience. Could it be that they are so dialed into the soul of their business that it's impossible to confuse what it means to be an iPhone user

versus an Android? Yes. Everything Apple does is born out of the soul of their business. Despite its almost indistinguishable user interface, I love my iPhone, and hate the Android phone I owned before it.

How could that be? Where does the bias come from? I would argue it's from Apple's ability to digitize the soul of their business into everything they do. It's so clear what Apple represents and who they are. We associate the same values with the consumers who use their products.

This is why you spend the time, resources and energy to digitize the soul of your business. Winning the battle for attention online is about accumulating true believers. Whether you're a business of five, five thousand or five hundred thousand, the more true believers you accumulate, the faster your message will spread.

Digitizing the soul of your business is not easy. If you were looking for easy, then you've purchased the wrong book. There are two reasons this chapter is located at the beginning of this book.

First: You must provide a deep, soul-filled message your audience can connect with. This is vital to winning the battle for attention online. No one wins attention with tactics alone. The audience must feel something deeper to stick around.

Second: You and the other decision-makers/influencers in your organization must be willing to take initiative to share the soul of your business in your content marketing efforts. If this initiative is missing, the rest of the tactics contained in the forthcoming pages will not work. Then, you'll be pissed at me because you bought a book that couldn't help your business.

Here are the five stages of digitizing the soul of your business. This is an important exercise, because it will set the tone for the content creation and distribution decisions you'll be asked to make later in the book.

I've made the case for the concept of digitizing the soul of your business as the path to winning the battle for attention online and long-term growth. Now, let's discuss the mechanics of how we actually do it.

## Stage One - Belief

*“And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom.” — Anaïs Nin*

The first step is to let go of any fear of failure, or anxiety you may have attached to sharing the soul of your business with the world. Creating content which evokes an emotional response from consumers can be uncomfortable. This can be especially true for businesses used to producing content thoroughly whitewashed by classic corporate jargon and legal disclaimers.

There are more than a few reasons why you may feel this fear or anxiety. The key factor I discover over and over again in my consulting work and speaking to audiences across the country: most organizations have no clue what the soul of their business actually looks like.

The soul of your business is not what you do or what you sell. Nor is it *how* you do what you do, or the people you sell it to. Start by thinking back to your Mission Statement on Day One. Digitizing the soul of your business is the articulation of your core motivation for turning the lights on every day.

On Day One, you believed. You believed in your "Why," and the people who were willing to do business with you on Day One believed as well.

Think back to our discussion on the Connected Generation consumer. These consumers have more options than they could ever need in choosing a vendor for every single product and service they require. Every vendor offers the same relative features and benefits.

The Connected Generation consumer wants to believe in who they do business with. According to a 2013 Brand Engagement Survey done by Gensler, 87 percent of consumers choose brands that match their values, and 71 percent of consumers will not buy from brands whose values go against their own.

A skeptic might conclude a, "Damned if you do, damned if you don't" scenario from these findings. It's true. Digitizing the soul of your business will turn off consumers whose values do not match your own. But a more accurate and practical conclusion would be that Connected Generation consumers are sorting themselves into lines of qualified leads, based on values your business is perceived to have.

The soul of your business is not what *you* believe it to be, but what *your customer* perceives it to be.

*EXERCISE: In one sentence, write down why you turned the lights on at your business on Day One. What problem were you trying to solve? Though it would be easy and (likely) at least partly true to just write "Money" or "Fame," try to think deeper. For most organizations, products and services may change, revenue streams may change, even ownership structure may change, but the reason they went into business on Day One is the same core reason they remain in business today.*

*Next, survey your current audience as to what they believe is the core motivation or soul of your business. You can hire a company to do this for you, use DIY tools such as Survey Monkey or just send out an email and ask for responses.*

*Once you've received a strong enough sample of responses from your audience, compare their answers to what you wrote down. Does your current audience perceive your soul to be what you believe it is?*

*Digitizing the soul of your business starts with narrowing the gaps between where your belief and your audience's perception currently lies.*

*For more resources and guidance on finding your core motivation visit <http://www.contentwarfarebook.com/core> (this link becomes active upon the publication of the entire book)*

## Stage Two - Realignment

*"Your stuff starts out being just for you... but then it goes out. Once you know what the story is and get it right - as right as you can, anyway - it belongs to anyone who wants to read it. Or criticize it." ~ Stephen King*

It doesn't matter if your business is mobile apps or appetizers, you must find what growth hackers call Product Market Fit. According to Ryan Holiday, author of *Growth Hacker Marketing*, "The best marketing decision you can make is to have a product or business that fulfills a real and compelling need for a real and defined group of people -- no matter how much tweaking or refining this takes."

Classic interruption-based marketing is predicated on convincing consumers, through gimmicks, pricing schemes and relentless advertising, that they need a product or service. Growth hackers find the Product Market Fit by matching product with audience and repeating the process until the product and its message fit a core audience perfectly. Unfortunately, if you haven't previously shared the values upon which your business is built, your current audience may not be the Product Market Fit.

Here's a classic example of this: Instagram didn't start out as Instagram. The founders of Instagram actually began with a mobile check-in app called Burbn. Built on the latest HTML5 code and backed by \$500,000 in venture capital from Baseline Ventures, Burbn had all the makings of a would-be winning mobile application. Then co-founders Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger saw a potentially disturbing trend in the way people were using Burbn: quick social photo-sharing.

So they realigned their business, and Instagram was born. Now, I'm not telling you to realign your business. However, what we learn from Instagram is that your first, or current, audience may understand your potential more than you do. Listening is crucial.

This is the moment when the nightmare comes true. People are going to leave. When your message is authentic (not contrived to fit some model you think your audience wants), it makes sense that some people would leave.

The consumers who leave at this stage have been wasting your time. They don't believe in your business. They're buying on price, features or proximity, and are more than willing to use the vendor next door the moment the price dips a penny below your own.

The realignment of your audience is healthy and natural. Below is an exercise to help you track the realignment of your audience

*EXERCISE: Have listening processes in place to capture feedback, both from current audience members possibly disgruntled by new messaging, and new audience members enamored by it. Without proper listening mechanisms in place, you won't be able to make the ongoing adjustments necessary to maintain momentum.*

*At the most basic level, use Google Analytics (and any additional traffic-tracking applications set up on your website). Web traffic is one indicator of who is connecting with which content on your website.*

*Use brand mention tools such as Mention.com and Google Alerts to track who is saying what about your brand.*

*Create a spreadsheet to track social media shares. Categorize the posts by type of messaging. Capture engagement and feedback on these posts (such as Likes, shares, comments, etc.). There are basic and advanced*

*tools which can help with this as well (such as Buffer App and Sprout Social).*

*For more resources and guidance on tracking audience realignment visit <http://www.contentwarfarebook.com/realign> (link becomes active upon full publication of this book)*

## **Stage Three - Connection**

*"Do what you do best and link to the rest." - Jeff Jarvis*

The transition from traditional interruption and/or mimicry advertising to marketing with a deeper message isn't always easy. Whether you have a documented strategy for content creation and distribution (according to the Content Marketing Institute 2014 Annual Report, only 44 percent of B2B content marketers actually do) or just a series of habits you've developed over time, your processes and priorities are going to change.

The goal in digitizing the soul of your business is deeper, creating more loyal one-on-one relationships. This means that metrics such as frequency of posting, total web traffic and social media network connection count can lose much of their significance. These metrics are replaced with Outbound Brand Engagement (discussed in the Metrics That Matter chapter), conversion rate and brand mentions, to name a few.

According to the above-mentioned report from Content Marketing Institute, 73 percent of B2B content marketers are producing more content than they did one year ago. In order to stand out, brands must focus their attention on the media types (text, video, audio, etc.) and distribution platforms (email marketing, social media, etc.) in which they do their best work. The one caveat to this is mega-brands, say the Fortune 1000, with the resources and budget to be everywhere they want.

The rest of us have limited budget and a finite amount of time to share our message. Even mid-market companies with marketing departments will struggle to connect on every social platform. So don't try (at least, not at first).

As more and more brands begin creating digital content, the spaces where that content is shared (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, your inbox, Google Search) become more cluttered. The only way to stand out is to create and distribute remarkable, memorable, valuable, useful content for a specific target audience. This becomes very tough if you're working inside ecosystems where your skills, message and/or product don't fit. True connection with your audience is almost impossible.

In an interview on *Chase Jarvis Live*, Gary Vaynerchuk explained his belief on choosing where to spend your social media efforts. He said: "Audiences scale on every platform. Choose the platform where you do your best work."

If you're funny, hang out on Twitter. If you're more cerebral, then Google+ is an option. Awesome at cat gifs? Tumblr and Facebook are the places to be.

Social media, in its most general sense, has existed for over two decades. The social media ecosystem is maturing. There aren't as many early adopter opportunities to gain quick momentum on a mass scale, like there were with launch of Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc. Gimmicky tactics and strategies that once amassed enormous social media followings now yield significantly diminished results.

Add in social network throttling of post visibility, such as Facebook has done with their news feed algorithm. (As of the writing of this book, brand-page Facebook posts reach only two to sixteen percent of fans). Even those companies who are able to amass large social media followings struggle to build real connection.

Our success as marketers will not come from large social media follower counts (even if these stats are an internal metric of success), but rather from our ability to *activate* our audience.

How do we activate an audience? Through focused one-to-one relationship-building on a limited number of platforms and media. Your goal is not followers. You need connections, relationships, believers, people who see themselves in the soul of your business.

We don't build these kinds of relationships by blasting our message throughout social media, in emails or YouTube pre-roll advertisements. No, these relationships are built more subtly.

A great example of this is Hubspot's Email Unsubscribe Video (you can watch this video by visiting <http://www.contentwarfarebook.com/unsubscribe>). When you unsubscribe from Hubspot's email newsletter you're taken to a page with a video. In that video, Dan Sally, an inbound marketing specialist for Hubspot, looks straight into the camera and gives a seemingly-authentic last-ditch plea for the email subscriber to reconsider and stay on the list. That's human. That's real.

That's marketing!

Unlike every other experience someone has unsubscribing from an email list, what the video does is create a human relationship. You're not just unsubscribing from Hubspot, you're unsubscribing from Dan Sally. Hubspot could send people who hit the unsubscribe button a "Sorry to see you go" email or landing page like every other company. No one would ever question them for such a conventional move.

But that's not the soul of Hubspot's business. Their willingness to create a piece of content outside of traditional best practices, content designed solely to build a deeper relationship with their consumers (even those ready to leave), is what activates their audience to stay. Does everyone stay? No. But more stay than stay with Hubspot's competition—those who settle for a generic "Sorry to see you go" message.

*EXERCISE: Where, in your marketing process, have you built opportunities to build one-to-one relationships? You might be responding to every tweet or comment. You may be adding personalization to emails. You may more robustly use uncut/lightly edited first- person video footage. You may highlight specific audience members in your marketing content.*

*Make a list of these opportunities, and begin creating content that embodies the soul of your business, personally and directly. The truth is that no single activity is likely to bring overnight success. Your best bet is a mixture of relationship-building tactics.*

*For more examples of ways to build one-on-one relationships into your social media and content marketing, visit: <http://www.contentwarfarebook.com/relationship> (link activates upon publication of book).*

## **Stage Four - Activate**

*"Telling purposeful stories is interactive. It's not a monolog. Ultimately, purposeful tellers must surrender control of their stories, creating a gap for the listener(s) to willingly cross in order to take ownership. Only when the listener(s) own the tellers' story and make it theirs, will they virally market it." ~ Peter Guber*

Nothing happens if your audience is not active and engaged. The audience eager to receive your next message grows your bottom line. So, how do we activate your audience to help digitize the soul of your business?

Let your audience play a role in determining what the soul of your business is, and how you deliver your message. This is one part of Austin Kleon's philosophy to "Show Your Work."

In his book, *Show Your Work*, Austin Kleon makes the case for letting your audience behind the curtain of creation. Kleon writes, "Words matter. Artists love to trot out the tired line, 'My work speaks for itself,' but the truth is, our work

doesn't speak for itself. Human beings want to know where things came from, how they were made, and who made them. The stories you tell about the work you do have a huge effect on how people feel and what they understand about your work, and how people feel and what they understand about your work affects how they value it."

This is how you activate an audience. You make them a part of your business by letting them into your world. This will be different for every business. Kleon is specifically talking to artists in his book, but the advice transcends the business world as well.

This doesn't mean sharing your proprietary, trademarked process for creating whatever widgets you sell. Showing your audience behind the curtain could be as simple as explaining the origin of your company's name, like Wistia (a video hosting company).

The name Wistia is different and unique, and Wistia comes right out and shares that their name is completely made up. They chose the name because it sounded cool, and the domain name was available! This short, seemingly innocuous tale of choosing their name lets customers and fans of Wistia deeper into the company. You can picture the discussion between co-founders Chris Savage and Brendan Schwartz as they rattle off fun-sounding words before landing on Wistia.

Sharing is a small but powerful thing. Cleverly-shot marketing videos show the inner workings of Wistia's office space, making customers feel as if they know the humans behind the software. I know, because I am a customer. Even with no endorsement deal to motivate me, I recommend Wistia as often as I can. There are many video hosting providers, yet there is only one (besides YouTube) that I recommend.

And it isn't just sharing your own work that helps consumers attach themselves to your brand. "Your influences are all worth sharing because they clue people in to

who you are and what you do--sometimes even more than your own work," writes Kleon.

The goal in showing your work is to provide consumers with a tangible representation of what your brand (personal and/or corporate) stands for. This way, when you finally ask potential customers to subscribe to your email list, buy your product or refer a friend, consumers feel like they're supporting an organization they belong to, not just some corporation looking for more profit.

Done right, your audience won't feel like they're buying a product. They'll feel like they're supporting a cause.

And that's when the magic happens.

*EXERCISE: How can you let your audience behind the curtain of your business? What aspects of your business can you share on a regular basis that would allow consumers to feel a deeper connection to what you do?*

*This is your opportunity to not just **tell** your audience about the soul of your business, but actually **show** them. Find activities, moments, even personalities around the office that give your audience a raw feel for how your product is made.*

*For more examples of organizations "Showing Their Work," visit: <http://www.contentwarfarepodcast/showyourwork> (link activates upon publication of book)*

## Stage Five - Action

*"Failure isn't fatal, but failure to change might be" – John Wooden*

Digitizing the soul of your business is an abstract concept. I'm asking you to make the intangible tangible, through content you share into a computer or

handheld device. It's an uncomfortable concept, because sharing something so intimate elicits judgment and criticism.

When we step outside our comfort circle, (that little circle our business operates in everyday that is safe and secure, boring and dispassionate), this is when real relationships are made. When we position our business to create emotional connections with consumers, the possibilities are vast and endless. We begin to experience the freight train-like momentum of brand loyalty.

We're no longer attracting consumers. We're building an audience.

But I must caution, as success is possible, so is failure. By the sheer nature of "endless possibilities" one of those possibilities must be failure. Prepare for these failures, for as former U.S. Senator and Hall of Fame basketball player Bill Bradley wrote, "Ambition is the path to success. Persistence is the vehicle you arrive in."

Let's look at this from a different angle. I was a football player in high school. I loved it. Pure, raw, uninhibited emotional energy expended at its maximum with no regard for personal safety. You were celebrated for letting go of what a normal societal engagement would consider civilized, by delivering impact with every ounce of force in your being. There are few legal things in life (maybe, extreme sports and actual war), which can release a euphoric cocktail of dopamine and adrenaline equal to leveling your opponent on the football field.

I was a linebacker (which means my job was to hit people) and I was good (by Upstate New York high school football standards). I could set aside the moral human and let the animal out as easily as turning on the lights. I loved it.

In a game where your job is to deliver impact, your opponent's job is the same. To be successful at football while remaining injury-free, as strange it might sound, you need accept the fact you're going to get hit. When you get hit, it's going to hurt, and it's going to happen again.

The worst part? No one cares that it hurts. They consider it part of the job. The ability to take a hit is the barrier to entry. It's a relatively high barrier explaining why most people don't play football.

At Columbia High School in East Greenbush, New York, despite being a Class AA school, we never had enough players to fill out a roster. Therefore, anyone who could hack it got a spot. All you had to do was survive. All you had to do was understand that you were going to fail and the only expectation anyone really had, was that you get back up and do it again on the next play.

Every year kids would try out because they thought it would be cool to be under the "Friday Night Lights," wearing the gear while a grandstand full of people cheered. Every year these kids would make the same mistake. They thought by becoming wide receivers or defensive backs (positions with traditionally less contact), they could avoid the impact.

Their mistake is not in strategy, but in conceptual understanding of the game. Everyone gets hit. Everyone fails. These individuals were so worried about getting lit up by an opponent, they never actually engaged in the game.

The sideline is safe. The sideline is your comfort circle. You will not fail on the sideline. You can stand there, look good, be part of the team and feel safe. You can look out onto the field and dream of what you "could" do if ever given the opportunity. You can make excuses for why you're not in the game, all the while knowing deep inside that the reason you're not the field is simple: fear.

You're afraid of getting hit. You're afraid of being humiliated. You're afraid of failure.

So, stay on the sideline where it is safe. You won't be hit or humiliated or fail. You won't be criticized for your play, no one will judge your decisions, no one will question you, because they won't even know you're there.

I'm going to assume, because you're reading this book that you want to be on the field. Maybe you feel like you're currently on the sideline. Maybe, you feel like you're on the field but failing too often. If either of these scenarios are the case, it's most likely because you're playing the content marketing game too safe.

When you play it safe, no one cares what you're up to. No one wants to know what you're doing or what you have to say. Your comfort circle is safe and that's great, but no one is going to be inspired by your safe content. Your safe content is making you a commodity.

Let's look at this from inside an industry I'm very familiar with: the insurance industry. Specifically, the insurance industry's second largest writer of auto insurance, GEICO. According to a report published by Nomura Equity Research, in 2012 GEICO spent over \$1.1 billion dollars on advertising, the highest among every insurance carrier in America. The report goes on to say, "For a commoditized product, low cost and effective marketing are keys to share gain."

GEICO's 2012 results would bear out the truth in this statement. In 2012, GEICO grew in all 50 states, including a 12.6 percent median growth rate in their top 10 states, compared to the 4.1 percent of direct-writing competitor Progressive Insurance, who spent only \$526 million on advertising during the same period.

It would seem, based on these statistics, that GEICO's epic ad spending and creative commercials with lizards and cavemen and frogs is a strategy for success. However, in a study done by The Hanover Insurance Group, nearly 60 percent of consumers who had purchased insurance through a direct channel 10 or more years ago reported switching back to an independent insurance agent because they wanted more value.

Commenting on the study, Mark R. Desrochers, president, personal lines insurance at The Hanover Insurance Group stated, "This research demonstrates that consumers really value the advice provided by independent agents and the

personal relationships they build with their customers. The majority of respondents said their number one reason for switching from a direct insurance provider was to have someone to guide them through their insurance buying decisions. Clearly trust and expertise are important to consumers.”

I take these two data points, (GEICO's ability to grow based on price-driven advertising and 60 percent of direct insurance consumers returning to independent insurance agents inside of 10 years) and conclude that GEICO is not digitizing the soul of their business. GEICO has attention and that attention is creating revenue, but the attention doesn't stick. Consumers aren't making an emotional attachment to the cost savings and humorous cartoon advertising on which GEICO drives new business.

If you're a small to mid-size insurance agency competing against GEICO, your only offensive strategy is to connect with consumers on a deeper level. This is the same for start-ups searching for the gap in the market their larger, more established competitors don't currently fill. You can sit on the sideline pushing price and product, or you can look deep inside your organization to share the "Why."

A company that sits on the sideline is just another commodity. GEICO is very good at selling a commodity, but as The Hanover Insurance Group's study shows, consumers have made little to no emotional connection to the brand.

Today's Connected Generation consumer wants more out of their product and service providers. These consumers want to know who you are and how your products or service benefits them. The brands that are winning the battle for attention are going a step further and creating an experience around their brand consumers can connect to on a deeper level and use as a piece of self-expression.

We live in a world of options and our decision to digitize the soul of our business can either make us "The Choice" or just another choice in the sea of vendors and commodity pushers.

High school football taught me a very important lesson: Whether you succeed or fail in your effort, the pain of impact is always substantially less when you deliver the blow. Likewise, the pain of failure is less for those who instigate the action.

Fail as a result of action. Learn, adjust, repeat. This is how you become a better football player. It is also how you succeed marketing your business in the digital world.

It's time to step out into the world and deliver your blow. Bring the fight to your competition by telling your story and the story of those you serve in the digital world. Digitize the soul of your business, for our battle as marketers and business owners isn't over lines on a football field, but the hearts and minds of our respective consumers.

*EXERCISE: Create accountability partnerships within your organization to ensure the opportunities found in step 3 are acted upon here in step 4. It's a sad truth, but I know, from presenting across the United States for more than three years on digital marketing that vast majority of people reading this book won't act on it.*

*No action, no results. The best way to ensure action is to be accountable to someone else. Traditionally, we're accountable to a manager or higher-up within an organization, the boss or a board. But according to Mike Thaman, CEO of Owens Corning, there is a huge difference between "holding someone accountable," which has mainly negative and punitive connotations, and "creating accountability in others," which is about being vested in the performance success of others.*

**Content Warfare:** *How to find your audience, tell your story and win the battle for attention.*

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*Whether you use accountability systems or not, the simple truth is you have to do the work of creating the content that will spread your message to the Product Market Fit audience.*

*For more hacks on getting work done visit: <http://www.contentwarfarebook.com/work> (link becomes active when entire book is published)*

## The Rub

The five stages of digitizing the soul of your business could possibly be the most important lessons you take away from this book. The ability to connect and activate an audience makes car buyers max their budget for a Mercedes, instead of a more affordable Infiniti.

The companies that create a content marketing culture will embrace small setbacks, solicit audience feedback, adapt their message and re-implement on the fly. Such companies will be the winners in Content Warfare.

Everyone else will be chasing the next set of marketing tactics while complaining about the ROI.

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This is an excerpt chapter from **Content Warfare: How to find your audience, tell your story and win the battle for attention.**

*written by: Ryan Hanley*

*Ryan Hanley is the founder of [Hanley Media Lab](#), an advanced content marketing agency helping companies grow their audience, to grow their business. Ryan is also the producer of the [Content Warfare Podcast](#), one of iTunes top content marketing podcasts for over two years. You can connect with Ryan on [Google+ here](#).*

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