

Don't look, jump!

Post-millennial thoughts on management and life.

Brought to you by the good folks at

Synonym

www.asynonym.com



SYNONYM LLC (2008)

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About Synonym

Synonym is a group of creative professionals committed to helping education, innovative startups and non-profits get their message out in a digital world.

Or at least, that's the company line.

Truth is, we'll work with any group of individuals who think we can help and we believe can benefit from our talents.

We hope Don't Look, Jump! helps you out a bit in the pursuit of your goals.

Feel free to let us know if you liked it (or if you didn't) by dropping us an email at goteam@asynonym.com

An Introduction

While everyone has their own sets of goals and dreams, it seems more and more that it can become difficult for some of us to block out all of the negativity and distractions that prevent us from reaching our full potential.

Synonym began when one guy decided to see if there was anyone else in the world was interested in contributing their skills based on a philosophy of creating a different kind of web company. Our success has been borne out of good timing and fortune of being able to attract quality people to our camp, through our words.

This book will focus a lot on the web – since that’s what we do – and millennials. But we think it can be applied to pretty much any field and can be useful whether you’re in the mailroom or the executive suite.

There is no better time than now

Really, it's true.

You're just going to sit there and dream about all of the ways you can make change and yet, nothing will happen. Before you know it, life will get a hold of you. You'll be ten years older, in more debt and the days you have now doing mindless work that doesn't challenge you is going to seem luxurious in comparison.

Sure, you'll be making more money. You'll have a better title, nice business cards and maybe an expense account. But you won't be happy and isn't that point of all of this anyway?

That's why you need to take your chance now. This is the best time for you to plot what you want to do and head towards it. The challenges ahead might seem insurmountable.

After all, you probably don't feel like you have the connections or the know-how to really make it work. That's okay. No one said it was going to be easy or even a particularly desirable road towards the success you seek.

But every day you waste trying to make excuses, is just one more day that you fail to affect change or make progress.

You might be thinking, *"This sure is one crappy motivational tool."*

Don't worry, it gets better.

Planning the next big thing

The barriers to your success are often organizational. It's not hard for most people to come up with big ideas or things they'd love to see changed. Where they get hung up, is trying to figure out how to plot out making something happen.

We've tried to fix that with a little ditty called *The Dream Sheet*. Actually, you can call it whatever you want. After all, it belongs to you. But it's usually typed and reads like this:

What I want to do

Why I want to do it

How I'll do it

How I'll afford to eat doing it

My pipe dream after I've done it

Yeah, we know it's simple. That's the point. If a project doesn't have a dream sheet, then it doesn't get pursued any further. The exercise is meant to make you *less* excited about your idea. It's the most practical part of your planning, because after writing all of this down, you ought to be fired up enough to take the world or sufficiently doused and ready to change into a new set of clothes.

It's really easy to take a new idea out for a spin and get super excited about what could happen if you actually manage to pull it off. It's also easy at the first sign of trouble to think of all of the reasons why it's doomed to fail and why you ought to quit.

The dream sheet doesn't force you into negative thinking – remember, you are what you think – it just forces you to confront your idea head on. No possibility is too big, either.

Do an exercise with the dream sheet based on the idea of **going to the moon**. You'll find yourself considering the possibilities of *how* to do it, rather than why you can't.

Even though this particular idea is pretty unlikely to happen, if it's something you can conceive tactically, you'll start to come up with ways to get there – even if it takes a long time. (Notice the dream sheet doesn't mention timeframes) That's precisely the point of the exercise. Focus on what you **can** do and start doing it.

Engaging in Active Dialogue

We talk a lot about a concept coined *Active Dialogue*. But what is it? Active Dialogue is based upon a formula:

People + Ideas + Communication = Action.

In too many instances, organizations don't seem to value any of the three pieces of the formula. You might argue that you can have action without any of the three being embraced and that's true. But it's unlikely to be the sort of action you want.

Active Dialogue presupposes that if you value people, their ideas and their feedback, you'll get the sort of action you want. You can apply it however you like, whether it's professional relationships or how you run meetings. The premise is that you can be inclusive, still get things done and be decisive.

From a personal standpoint, Active Dialogue can be part of a living a more action oriented life. It can be really easy for individuals to hoard thoughts and ideas, because they don't feel included or valued. We usually look at this and say that it just hurts the institution they are serving. The truth is, individuals suffer a lot more than their workplace does. Nothing is worse than when you feel like the work you do has no value.

Maybe this seems like idealistic hooey, but more and more, employers are finding out exactly how much millennials want to be valued. They're not the first ones, either. It's just the first generation to decide to speak up about it.

The action oriented workplace

The whole idea of *action oriented living* is something we try to incorporate into how we pursue new projects whether they're related to professional or personal life. Millennials get this better than anyone, because it seems these days that every one in college is thinking about the world in a much broader way than ever before. You can blame the web for this.

As it relates to their lives or their jobs, millennials are far more concerned with what they can do and what their role is in making it.

Some employers fail to capitalize on the fervor and passion of their newest recruits and empower them in such a manner that gives them the satisfaction of having contributed at a high level to the success of the institution, without letting them step on everyone's toes.

It's a tight rope act to pull it off. When you're just starting out with little to lose, you can start a company from scratch comprised almost entirely of millennials and Generation X types and as a result, you avoid a lot of problems that more established organizations are dealing with.

The action oriented workplace provides a platform of purpose. Having a mantra or philosophy that governs what you do, will give those under your aegis the chance to understand what the overarching goals are. None of this has to be dogmatic or rote.

There are plenty of theories out there that are already being employed by much larger and more successful firms. Still, year after year, big box companies lose their starlets for less endowed companies that you've never heard of (like us.)

Does it matter? Well, maybe not to you. But for the morale of those working in the trenches, it could be the difference between seeing an opportunity for growth and looking for a parachute.

Millennials at work

We've heard colleagues who are managing millennials lament the poor work ethic of today's youth who can't seem to appreciate the value of hard work. They talk about how much they job hop, how they're always in search of new opportunities and that their sense of loyalty has been thrown out the window.

Do you blame them?

We're talking about a generation who has watched entire industries shut down, pack up and move across the ocean. At the same time, they've grown up around what amounts to the oil rush of their day. We have the world at our fingertips and truly feel – more than ever before – that anything we want is within our grasp if we're willing to reach and stretch far enough.

How does your *company* expect to compete with that?

If you're a millennial and you read this, know that being adventurous and looking for a challenge isn't an excuse to be flaky. There is no shame in the time tested adage of "your time will come." We've turned it on its head a bit, saying instead:

Your time will come. But if you sit too long and nothing happens, it might be time to change time zones.

Don't expect opportunity to come knocking

It's probably not going to happen. I mean, it might be cool to hope that if you just send an envelope in the mail and stamp it, that someone will knock on your door and tell you that you've won \$10 million dollars. In the month(s) you wait to see if you're going to win, you might as well be doing something else to bide your time.

The premise of this little book is really focused on taking charge and control of your life. The bottom line is, life is short and there are just too many things out there waiting to be tackled, that you're really doing the world – and yourself – a disservice by sitting around doubting yourself or worrying that you won't be good enough.

It's hard these days. Millennials are more likely to graduate college with five or six figure debt and that's before you have to consider finding a job that will pay the bills.

With gas prices soaring, the economy seemingly in a shambles for many and the gloom that's feigned by the media, it can often be difficult to be hopeful – much less innovative and fired up to pursue your goals.

But none of these things can be an excuse. The barriers to entry are not what they used to be, if you stick to your guns and focus on your strengths. Where you might be deficient, find people who are strong in those areas to help you thrive and work together.

The goal here isn't really to set the world on fire. It's simply to take one step progressively towards positive action.

If you can do that, you will thrive.

The path to success

Now that you've started to plot out what you want to do, understand how to affect change within your organizations and have likely started to think about what you want to do next, it's time to get out your dream sheet again.

But instead of just going back over the stuff you wrote before, you're going to add to it, based on what you learned along the way. We'll call this the *Success Agenda*. When you're in this "So Now What?" phase, these are the three questions to ask yourself:

1. *On the way there, I thought of this...*
2. *But this is a problem to keep in mind...*
3. *So what now?*

What's the purpose of this exercise? For the first one, we reserve this one for trying to delve into things that come to after we've begun the development process. Sometimes, it's a helpful tool when I've fleshed out a project far better than we anticipated or took it in a direction that we didn't initially believe it would go. This gives us the chance to go further into where it's headed and to redirect, if it needs to be done at that point.

On the second, we assume that problems will crop up at all times. Here is the opportunity to lay out a few of the things that you might not have envisioned and some ways to possibly deal with them. With number three, is helpful if you've redirected the initial idea. It gives you a chance to lay out what's next, or to solidify plans and list action steps.

The three questions should help you along as you're developing your idea to start to prod yourself into thinking of the things that you can come up with on your own.

This exercise is obviously not the same as the collaborative process, which will yield other things, but it's helpful for you as the project lead to be able to flesh out what's going on moving forward.

The best thing about this is to be methodical and to keep yourself focused on the goal, because sometimes as you go through a project it barely resembles it's original self as you get towards the end if you're not careful. This is a chance to frame the idea from the start and constantly develop from the basic premise of what you're trying to accomplish. It also forces you to constantly attack the idea and we feel like that's always helpful to do.

Conclusion

That's it for now. We're not really sure what you'll get out of this. We really feel like there are tons of people out there who are reasonably smart, passionate and good at what they do. They're looking for a chance to break out and a chance to do something special. This collection of words is aimed at them.

Of course, we realize that there are other people who might be likely to benefit from reading all of this. We hope that it finds you and helps you to do something you never considered or jolts you into embracing some of the philosophies we've outlined throughout this book.

Feel free to get in touch, if you want to chat more about the subjects or ideas we've proposed throughout the book.