



*Strategies for Acceleration and Reinvention*

## **IoNTELLIGENCE Brief | Newsletter 2 | April 2017**

### **Key Points**

- **Ask a stranger about your next big decision (just not *any* stranger)**
- **These two questions can transform your company or career**
- **Forget Money and Power; Covet Time and Attention**
- **Read Stuffocation and listen to the a16z Podcast**

### **Acceleration**

*Do you have a big decision coming up? Consider asking a stranger what to do.* I'm serious. Daniel Gilbert, psychologist and author of [Stumbling on Happiness](#) has demonstrated that humans are terrible at predicting what will make us happy (it's called [affective forecasting](#)). Therefore, making a decision based on how we *think* the choice will make us feel (*my life will change with that new [fill in the blank] or we should go to X for spring break*) is a really bad idea. It's actually far more useful to *ask someone* who has *done what you are considering doing*. Studies show that other people's experiences (think a TripAdvisor review of that hotel you're considering) are a much more accurate guide to how you will likely feel after your decision or purchase. These people act as "surrogates" for your future self, and the process is called, appropriately enough, [surrogation](#). **So if you're thinking about moving to Mexico, don't picture yourself drinking pinas on the beach - ask someone else who has moved there how they feel about their decision.** You'll be glad you did - and you can apply this thinking tool to all sorts of other choices that life throws your way ...

*For more information on this idea, click [here](#)*

## Reinvention

Frederick Smith, the CEO of FedEx, was once asked what he thought his company did. At first glance, it seems like a stupid question; FedEx is the world's premier shipping and courier service. But according to lore, the company really took off when the CEO realized that they weren't actually in the express package business.

As he noted later, "We thought that we were selling the transportation of goods; in fact, we were selling peace of mind." This may seem like a glib reformulation, but the reframing of his organization's purpose had far-reaching consequences.

I linger on this example because I've come to use this as a clarifying question for organizations. **Asking what I call the FedEx question is to answer: what business are we really in?** This reflection gets to the heart of your company's mission which, when clarified and communicated well, will allow you to run your company well today. But it's also helpful in pointing the way towards a new tomorrow ...

Read more by clicking on this [link](#) (4 minute read):

## Magnificent Mistake Thought of the Month

***"Wise men learn by other men's mistakes, fools by their own."* (Proverb)**

I'm not an expert on success, but I do know a thing or two about failure. Learning from your mistakes is good. Learning from other's mistakes is better. Learning from both is best.

For more information on this idea, click [here](#)

## Pop Philosophy

***Forget Money and Power; Covet Time and Attention***

*"Time is the ultimate luxury."*

When my Tesla S-driving, Panerai watch-wearing, Venice Beach-living friend said that the other day, I leaned in. Despite living on the Pacific Ocean and rocking a dream job, my buddy also often found himself harried and hurried by constant work trips, 80 hour

weeks and 1 youngster at home with one on the way. He was lifestyle-rich and time-poor.

His observation prompted some soul-searching. What are the most valuable resources in the world today? If you answered power and money, I wouldn't blame you; that's what pop culture and cable news suggest with their coverage of Washington and Wall Street every day. Maybe wealth and influence aren't everything in life, though. **I've come to believe that the most precious of personal assets are time and attention.**

Read more by clicking on this [link](#) (4 Minute Read):

## Binge-Worthy

### **Stuffocation: Living More with Less | James Wallman (released 2013)**

This book is hard to find, but nothing valuable in life usually comes easily. I stumbled on this paperback in December, 2015 in London and it proceeded to rock my world. Most people can probably agree that we need less stuff in our lives, but this book brings the argument to another level. The first part is devoted to making the definitive case for how we are weighed down by material possessions (hence the title). The second outlines how normal people can move towards a simpler life without feeling contrived (joining the [tiny house movement](#)) or deprived (owning just [288 items in all](#)). **The top take-away: invest in experiences, not things. It will make your life less cluttered and more fulfilling.**

Binge Follow-Up: when reading this has changed the way you look at your stuff, jump on to Netflix and pair this with the thought-provoking documentary [Minimalism](#). *Warning*: you may be compelled to start your annual spring cleaning ritual immediately after watching ...

### **Aural Stimulation: A16Z Podcast**

I've been walking back and forth to the gym this winter (good for the body and good for the mind!) and one of the fringe benefits has been the opportunity to do a deep dive into my podcast queue (like your Netflix one, only less used!). The most consistent source of thought-provoking discussions have come from the [a16z podcast](#), a series of conversations with thought and business leaders hosted by Silicon Valley superstar VC (venture capital) firm [Andreessen Horowitz](#). If you aren't drawn to business talks this

will still be a great source of insights, as one superb recent show included a mind-expanding [interview](#) with [Sapiens](#) author Yuval Harari (one of my recommendations from the March Newsletter).

Binge Follow-Up: Listen to this [future-focused talk](#) on where autonomous cars will take us (hint: [further than you think](#)).

### **A Final Thought to make you go “hmmm”**

*“I’ve had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened.” (Mark Twain)*

*If this isn’t for you, no worries. Unsubscribe here. **If someone you know might enjoy this monthly newsletter, forward this one or have them sign up at [IonValis.com](#). Thanks!***

*Cheers,*

***Ion***