

Smartphones, The Secret of Life, And Special Relativity

On May 24, 1844, a communications revolution took place when American inventor Samuel F.B. Morse dispatched a telegraph message from the U.S. Capitol to Alfred Vail at a railroad station in Baltimore, Maryland. Vail's response a moment later is still worth contemplating today: "What Hath God Wrought?"

Of course, America's communications transformation didn't end there! Nor with telephones, radio/TV or computers. Which — 150 years after the advent of the telegraph — brings me to smartphones.

Smartphones are now making some of us super-hyper.

Long, annoying chain texts. Hundreds of redundant daily emails. Countless apps: Alexa. Siri. Cable. Netflix. Hulu. Facebook. Twitter. Snapchat. LinkedIn.

Just penning these 21st century advancements throws my whole being into anxiety mode, with ever-increasing frustration and big-time FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out).

Slow down a bit here.

I do like my smart devices, but not all the time. I love access to information, but not overstimulation. I like how life has gotten much easier—but dislike its complications.

We are in a pivotal "in between" era. A time when technology is becoming much more sophisticated and easier to use. A time that is disrupting our patterns and routines. A time that is jarring our brains as we are being bombarded by one technological transition after another.

It's the classic hamster on the wheel. The faster we go, the faster we go. Step off for a respite of sleep.

Repeat the next day.

And the next day starts seconds after reaching for our smartphone to ramp back up to full technological frenzied speed!

Yes, it is problematic.

How do we think about this predicament? When do we step off the wheel and take a break? Take a breath? Shift our visceral being into a different mode? Not "on" or "off." More like slowing the pace, deliberately decompressing, and peacefully contemplating.

It can be as simple as defining our lives through different lenses.

The first lens is our money.

When is enough enough? Is this even the correct question to ask ourselves?

Constantly pushing hard for wealth accumulation can lead to a more frenzied life. Sometimes, stepping back to take stock of our overall financial position, as it relates to what is most important to us, is a highly relevant and prudent exercise.

Like any other facet of our life, the pursuit of one thing at the expense of all else is not a good thing.

Money repositions itself in our thinking when at some point we determine we have reached a zone of neutrality. That place may often times be defined as "having enough."

In other words, there is a shift in being from focusing on money accumulation to money parity.—Not parity of dollars and cents, but *parity of being*.

A second important lens is our daily routine.

You know, the daily established list of things we do.

We are creatures of habit.

Habits can change when we decide to do so. New habits then replace current habits. What we don't sometimes recognize is that so many of our habits do change slowly, inexorably over time.

Remember yesteryear? That time when we walked outside in the morning to collect the newspaper, to then sit down with a cup of coffee and check out what our favorite stock closed at the prior day.

Depending on our reaction, positive or negative, it could set the tone for what kind of day we were going to have.

That same newspaper had a full section of coupons that could be cut out, for our local grocery and department store shopping.

Those habits are long gone.

Who can wait 24 hours for the paper anymore? Searching for time-sensitive information using a newspaper or magazine is ridiculously slow and unproductive.

Today, a stock quote can be accessed from a plane traveling from Bangkok to Beijing at 38,000 feet on an active WiFi network in real time, along with a dozen articles posted in the past hour on what is happening with our favorite stock, ETF, cryptocurrency or commodity.

While flying, we can catch up on social media postings, tweets, blogs, videos and messages—immediately sharing our latest thoughts and musings.

Want to buy something? That's easy. While still in the air, go through Amazon Prime. Order online.

And this little piggy went OFF THE GRID



Have the Beijing Fulfillment Center deliver it to your hotel so it is waiting for you when you arrive.

This stuff is super cool. But complicated.

So—stop to read the morning newspaper? Or quickly run through a dozen or so Internet cloud-based apps to do

the same thing?

Faster?—Yes. Convenient?—Yes. Timely?—Yes. Easier?—Maybe. Simpler?—Maybe. Complex?—Maybe. (Frankly, an awful lot of “maybes.”)

We can make the argument there is no going back. Very true. But we can also look at reality.

Before taking off from Bangkok, we didn't order the item we needed delivered to the Beijing hotel that is necessary for tomorrow's meeting. The little voice in the wee corner of our brain was screaming, “Order it now while you have a reliable Internet connection in the airport!”

“No. No. Other things to do. I'll do it on the plane.”

Guess what! The WiFi is down on the plane. That happens more often than we might realize.

The result? Our blood pressure rises. Stress builds. Promises are broken. Meetings rescheduled.

You get the picture.

Not that this didn't happen years ago in the analog age.

One of my early mentors once asked me a loaded question: “Gary, when do you arrive for an out-of-town meeting?” I don't remember my exact answer, but it was not correct in his assessment. He said,

“No, always arrive the day before. This ensures you will always be prepared and ready for a positive and productive meeting.”

His time-honored point: You should order that important meeting item over the Bangkok airport WiFi before boarding the plane— Always!

A new habit to be established.

Remember the early 1970s when FedEx showed up? Wow! Overnight, guaranteed delivery. This was better than sliced bread!

Ever-mounting technological advances are here to stay. We are constantly transitioning through a variety of tech breakthroughs.

They're ubiquitous. They cross all social, economic and cultural strata.

You and I have a choice each day to decide how much they control us and how much we control them.

Our third important lens:

Of all the things we do in life, which ones do we like best?

Let me clarify this a little better.

If you could only pick one thing you could do for the rest of your life, what would that be? Let me make this even simpler. What one thing fascinates and motivates you above all else?

Yes. **What one thing, fascinates, motivates and impassions you?**

In the 1991 movie, “City Slickers,” the tough old cowboy character Curly, played by the late Jack Palance, appears in a scene with Mitch, played by Billy Crystal:

Curly: Do you know what the secret of life is?

Curly: This. (Holds up one finger)

Mitch: Your finger?

Curly: One thing. Just one thing. You stick to

that and the rest doesn't mean sh**.

Mitch: But what is the “one thing?”

Curly: (smiles) That's what you have to find out.

Here is mine: Money.

Yes, money. Everything about and around money. But most importantly, how money impacts my life, my family, my clients, my friends and my colleagues. It fascinates me from its pure analytical application to its defining emotional, cultural and spiritual aspects.

I love helping others address everything they do with their money and about their money. Money touches our desires, dreams, hopes and fears. It accentuates our pains, sorrows, despair and loneliness.

Every morning, I wake up wanting to do one thing. That one thing is help one person deal with one money issue to gain a higher singular clarity and move forward with one's life. That's it.

Technology is notorious for engrossing people so much that they don't always focus on balance and enjoy life at the same time.

-PAUL ALLEN

Money fascinates, motivates and impassions me.

Now, I appreciate that it may not be that simple for you. My guess is you have one thing or maybe two.

That's fine. When today's daunting technology is making some of us half-crazy, it's wonderful if we're still able to persevere and do what fascinates, motivates and impassions us.

It leavens daily life and makes it pleasantly tolerable.

If you've been fortunate to have the net worth, the money, the wherewithal to do what you want any time you want, then you may well be filling your days with “doings” of your own making. You may

already have identified the one thing that rings your bell.

Where do you go from here?

Well, I don't know about you, but I prefer to direct my money, along with my doings and my wants, at *maximizing my ability* to do my one thing.

How?

Every time I want to gain clarity about something that's taking up space in my brain, I ask and answer three questions, with some follow-on criteria. This exercise is a modification of a thinking tool that I was introduced to by **The Strategic Coach™**.

— What do I want this idea, thought or thing to accomplish for me?

— What's the biggest difference it will make in my life?

— What does the ideal outcome look like?

After answering these questions, we then ask ourselves what three things have to happen for us to be happy with the success that derives from moving forward with this idea, thought or thing.

What you'll probably find: **Positioning your money to do the things you love doing, and can do all day and every day, will fulfill you in more ways than you might possibly imagine.**

The polar opposite of this is allowing the daily cacophony of activities—of your making or not—to push you kicking and screaming through the day at break-neck speed with unrelenting chaos.

The above exercise will declutter your brain.

It will clarify your intention.

It will focus you on what is most important to you.

It beneficially centers your thinking and being on maximizing the one thing that is centermost to you and those around you.

How often do you whisper to yourself? You know, under your breath, mouthing words of frustration and irritation. How often do you allow cluttered thoughts to occupy your mind? Daily, weekly, monthly? The faster life becomes for us, the quicker we move into this agitated state of complexity.

Got a bunch of ideas taking up space in your brain? Try out this exercise to act on them or eliminate them. I love eliminating items. It's major brain decluttering.

We move daily through a technological fog tunnel, with rare glimpses of sunlight.

The evolving role of our money and our evolving tech-habit upgrades can go much smoother when we focus on one thing.

My mentor Ed Coyle told me 30 years ago: "Gary, you have to slow down to speed up." Now that seems like an oxymoron, but it's absolutely true.

A scientist — explaining Einstein's Law of Special Relativity with a speeding train — notes that a train passenger and a nearby person standing on a station platform have totally different perceptions when two bolts of lightning simultaneously flash at the front and rear of the passenger's train car.

Sometimes it's important to slow down, step off the train, stop multi-tasking frenetically, perceive much more fully, decide what is truly special, and embrace new improved habits.

Focus on doing one thing well.

Woody Allen once quipped: "I took a speed-reading course and read *War and Peace* in twenty minutes. It involves Russia."



Gary Klaben

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