

Linchpin
Seth Godin

Introduction

- p.9 "The cause of the suffering is the desire or organizations to turn employees into replaceable cogs in a vast machine. The easier people are to replace, the less they need to be paid. And so far, workers have been complicit in this commoditization."
- p.10 Model is operated by people with the lowest possible level of skill
- p.12 Difference between employee pay and value produced is profit
- p.14 Mechanical Turk: web site from Amazon.com that takes tasks and breaks them into smaller pieces for many people to perform
"Any project, if broken down into sufficiently small, predictable parts, can be accomplished for awfully close to free."
- p.17 Argument that most people work in a sort of factory, whether white collar or blue collar
- p.18 White collar work has become factory like (processes, procedures, outsourcing, etc.)
- p.21 "Abstract macroeconomic theories are irrelevant to the people making a million tiny microeconomic decisions every day in a hypercompetitive world. And those decisions repeatedly favor fast and cheap over slow and expensive."
- p.22 Three layers of the economy: bourgeoisie (factory owners), proletariat (workers) and linchpins (those who leverage something internal to create a position of power value)
- p.27 Need to stand out and be different, but merely being different isn't sufficient

Thinking About Your Choice

- p.29 "The problem is that most schools don't like great teachers. They're organized to stamp them out, bore them, bureaucratize them, and make them average."
Schools do not produce great artists
We must choose to be an artist or to take a job where we simply follow instructions and become a commodity
- p.32 Old American Dream: Keep your head down, follow instructions, show up on time, work hard, suck it up
New American Dream: Be remarkable, be generous, create art, make judgement calls, connect people and ideas
- p.33 "...the competitive advantage the marketplace demands is someone more human, connected and mature. Someone with passion and energy, capable of seeing things as they are and negotiating multiple priorities as she makes useful decisions without angst. Flexible in the face of change, resilient in the face of confusion."
- p.35 Linchpins may represent a threat to employers: employers depend on linchpins, they are difficult to replace, and they have power
- p.37 The stars of a company (linchpins) don't necessarily follow the rules
-They don't do exactly what they are told
-The don't work cheap
-The don't necessarily show up all the time and they challenge ideas

THOUGHT: If you want to be exceptional and irreplaceable, you will inherently have to be doing something different from the mainstream

Indoctrination: How We Got Here

- p.39 "We exist in a corporate manufacturing mindset, one so complete that anyone off the grid seems like an oddity."
- p.40 factory: a place where people go to do what they're told and earn a paycheck
THOUGHT: social contract
- p.41 Society has been reorganized to get good factory workers cheaply
Public education system changed our society by training millions of factory workers
Side-effect of factory-like society is a network of consumers
- p.42 "Keeping up with the Joneses is not a genetic predisposition. It's an invented need, and a recent one."
- p.43 "It appears to me that the only way they differ from a mediocre rule-follower is that they never bought into this self-limiting line of thought. That's it."
- p.44 Schools use fear to teach compliance
- p.46 "Capitalists need compliant workers, workers who will be productive and willing to work for less than the value that their productivity creates."
- p.47 Only two things should be taught in school: how to solve interesting problems and how to lead
- p.49 Linchpins are essential, and difficult to replace
- p.51 Linchpins work in bursts, most of them time doing mundane work, but every once-in-a-while creating massive amounts of value
The law of linchpin leverage: The more value you create in your job, the fewer clock minutes of labor you actually spend creating that value
- p.53 "In a rigid, mechanized system (a factory!), the difference between a pretty good employee and a great employee is small."
- p.55 Depth of knowledge needs to be combined with something else in order to be valuable (judgement, insight, diagnostic skills, etc.). The internet always knows more
- p.58 Linchpins are able to deal with a lack of structure and find a path that works
- p.66 As you get close to perfect it becomes very difficult to improve
Seek achievements where there is no limit
- p.67 "Art is never defect-free"
- p.68 "But artists embrace the mystery of our genius instead. They understand that there is no map, no step-by-step plan, and no way to avoid blame now and then."
- p.69 "If it wasn't a mystery, it would be easy. If it were easy, it wouldn't be worth much."
Problem with six sigma is that once you start heading down that road of continuous improvement there's little room left for remarkable innovation
Meeting expectations isn't remarkable
- p.72 Traditional resumes are worthless, projects, letters of recommendation, blogs, or an outstanding reputation is more valuable
- p.73 Traditional corporate HR practices of computer scanning resumes indicate that you are a replaceable cog
- p.74 How to get a job
- p.78 Top 10 factors motivating creative people to do their best work

p.79 "If you need to conceal your true nature to get in the door, understand that you'll probably have to conceal your true nature to keep that job."

Is It Possible To Do Hard Work In A Cubicle?

p.80 Emotional labor is the task of doing important work, even when it isn't easy. It's difficult and easy to avoid

p.83 "Art is anything that's creative, passionate, and personal. And great art resonates with the viewer, not only with the creator."

"An artist is someone who uses bravery, insight, creativity, and boldness to challenge the status quo. And an artist takes it personally."

p.84 "Art is a personal gift that changes the recipient."

p.85 "Art is the product of emotional labor."

p.86 "Most of all, art involves labor. Not the labor of lifting a brush or typing a sentence, but the emotional labor of doing something difficult, taking a risk and extending yourself."

p.90 A practical reason to become an artist is that art is at the center of our economy. Artists and linchpins will have some of the highest security in the future.

p.93 Two reasons to give a gift:

1) reciprocity (manipulative)

2) to make art

p.96 "The easier it is to quantify, the less it's worth."

p.100 "Now, though, the economy is forcing us to confront this fear. The economy is ruthlessly punishing the fearful, and increasing the benefits to the few who are brave enough to create art and generous enough to give it away."

The Resistance

p.102 "...the greatest shortage in our society is an instinct to produce."

Art needs to be shipped. Shipping may leave the work rough or unpolished, but the work still needs to move.

Not shipping is a symptom of resistance and will leave our art sitting in a box collecting dust, unseen

p.103 Shipping is where work meets the rest of the world

"The only purpose of starting is to finish, and while the projects we do are never really finished, they must ship."

p.104 Two challenges to shipping

1) Thrashing: apparently productive brainstorming and tweaking performed as a project develops

2) Coordination: groups with many people require more interactions making it difficult to thrash

p.106 "The Resistance" is the reason it is difficult to ship

Lizard brain is the source of the resistance (drives fear, insecurity, need to fit in, etc.)

p.107 "Every time you find yourself following the manual instead of writing the manual, you're avoiding the anguish and giving in to the resistance."

p.114 The reason the resistance slows us down and prevents us from fulfilling our artistic work is that we might fail

p.115 How to get good at losing:

"Successful people learn from failure, but the lesson they learn is a different one. They don't learn that they shouldn't have tried in the first place, and they don't learn that they are always right and the world is wrong and they don't learn that they are losers. They learn that the tactics they used didn't work or that the person they used them on didn't respond."

p.117 We generate a lot of bad ideas for every good idea

p.120 "This is precisely what your organization is facing. Over time, drip by drip, year by year, the manual was written, the procedures were set, and people were hired to follow the rules. The organization gets extremely efficient at producing a certain output a certain way...and then competition or change or technology arrives and the old rules aren't particularly useful, the old efficiencies not so profitable."

p.121 Fear of failure can hold us back, but so can fear of success. With success comes new challenges and new risks

p.123 "Our economy has reached a logical conclusion. The race to make average stuff for average people in huge quantities is almost over. We're hitting an asymptote, a natural ceiling for how cheaply and how fast we can deliver uninspired work."

p.124 Three biological factors driving job performance and innovation: social intelligence, fear response, and perception

p.129 Manifesto of getting things done from Bre Pettis

p.136 Anxiety is fear about fear, it is needless

"Anxiety doesn't protect you from danger, but from doing great things."

p.137 Two ways to deal with anxiety

1) Seek reassurance, prove everything is OK

2) Sit with anxiety, acknowledge, explore and befriend it

p.138 Shenpa ("scratching the itch") or giving in to the desire of our lizard brain

The Powerful Culture Of Gifts

p.150 Three reasons to understand gift culture

1) Internet has lowered the marginal cost of generosity

2) Impossible to be an artist without understanding the power of giving gifts

3) Gift giving can diminish the cries of the resistance

p.151 Winners in the linchpin economy will be the ones who give gifts

Internet makes it possible for gifts to spread everywhere and rapidly

Thomas Hawk photography

p.152 The new form of marketing is leadership--building and connecting tribes of like-minded people

p.153 "Teamwork" is used by bosses, coaches and teachers and means "Do what I say."

p.154 Reciprocity is a curse as it creates an obligation and isolates individuals. Gifts bind people

Gifts can act as a signal of surplus

p.156 Usury and the free gift of money within a tribe allows a tribe to flourish

p.157 Protestant reformation was enabled by commercial interests

"The merchant class was essential to imperialism and to the growth of the money culture, but it can't exist without a culture that encourages moneylending."

"For the last five hundred years, the best way to succeed has been to treat everyone as a stranger you could do business with."

- p.160 Investing time or resources into someone's success or happiness is a form of equity
- p.161 Three circles define the cycle of art
- 1) True gifts to friends, family and coworkers
 - 2) Those who pay for gifts in the circle of commerce
 - 3) Followers and fans who become fans in the circle of your tribe
- p.162 "A trade leaves things as they were, with no external surplus. A gift always creates a surplus as it spreads."
- p.163 "...if there is no gift, there is no art. When art is created solely to be sold, it's only a commodity."
- p.165 Art is scarce and the scarcity is what creates value
- Three ways people think about gifts
- p.169 "Reciprocity defined as payment for my work isn't the point. It's the appreciation of my work, the way it changes people--that's my payment."
- p.171 "And this is the challenge of becoming the linchpin. Not only must you be an artist, must you be generous, and must you be able to see where you can help, but you must also be aware. Aware of where your skills are welcomed."

There Is No Map

- p.174 What it takes to lead: the ability to find your own path that no one else has traveled
- "You can't make a map unless you can see the world as it is. You have to know where you are and know where you're going before you can figure out how to go about getting there."
- p.175 prajna: discernment, an ability to see things as they are
- p.177 the ability to see the world as it is begins with an understanding that certain things cannot be changed
- p.179 Don't get emotionally attached to outcomes you cannot control
- "There's a difference between passively accepting every element of your environment (and thus missing opportunities to exploit) and being wise enough to leave the unchangeable alone, or at least work around it."
- p.181 Linchpins need passion and discernment
- p.184 Artists need to avoid attachment to the object of their attention
- p.188 "Here's the truth that you have to wrestle with: the reason that art (writing, engaging, leading, all of it) is valuable is precisely why I can't tell you how to do it. If there were a map, there'd be no art, because art is the act of navigating without a map."

Making The Choice

- p.190 Loans to Amish farms and homes
- p.193 Binge culture in US colleges--get by in class, party a lot, become popular, drink when you can
- p.197 "Most organizations focus on return on machines. I don't mean only big, noisy, industrial machines. I am talking about the infrastructure of the organization. They have a system, a factory, a set of desks or buildings or computers or Web sites, and the goal is to extract maximum value from the machines they've got."
- p.201 "Linchpins don't need authority. It's not part of the deal. Authority matters only in the factory, not in your world."
- p.205 "...success lies in being generous or understanding someone or seeing a route that others don't see."

The Culture Of Connection

- p.211 Those that can connect with others create more value than those that simply "do the work"-- relationships matter
- p.215 We give away lots of tiny signals that show our true emotional state
"When you are stressed out of your gourd, we can tell. When you're lying, we can tell. When you are in pain, we can tell. The signals are honest because we're not that good at lying."
Genuine gifts pass our sniff test

The Seven Abilities Of The Linchpin

- p.218 Linchpins do two things
1) Exert emotional labor
2) Make a map
Seven abilities of the linchpin
- p.224 "The challenge, then, is to be the generous artist, but do it knowing that it just might not work. And that's okay."

When It Doesn't Work

- p.225 "Trying and failing is better than merely failing, because trying makes you an artist and gives you the right to try again."
- p.227 Pitfalls of monetizing art
1) Monetizing art will probably corrupt it
2) Attention doesn't equal cash flow
- p.229 "Organizations rarely give linchpins all the support and encouragement they deserve. Which means that your efforts won't always get what they need to succeed."