

Recipe for Success: Do One Thing and Do It Well

Ryan Mathews and Watts Wacker, authors of *What's Your Story? Storytelling to Move Markets, Audiences, People, and Brands*, made a remarkable statement: "Lose the audience, and it really doesn't matter how great your story is."

In a cluttered and distracted world, it doesn't matter how great your idea is—because if no one's listening, you've failed.

It doesn't matter that you have a brilliant strategy to solve your company's problems, because no one has the time to look at it or hear your plan. It doesn't matter that you're producing the next Hollywood blockbuster, because you can't get anyone in the industry to read the screenplay.

It doesn't matter that you've written a potential *New York Times* best-seller, because you can't interest a publisher. It doesn't matter that you have the next killer app if it just lingers in the app store with a billion competitors.

It doesn't matter if your idea can change the world if the world isn't paying attention.

So what's the answer? How do you break through? How do you or your ideas get noticed?

While researching and writing my new book, *One Big Thing: Discovering What You were Born to Do*, I realized that in today's distracted, digital culture, when it comes to getting businesses and nonprofit organizations noticed, it takes singular, brilliant execution.

In other words, they do "One Big Thing" extraordinarily well. In today's hyper-competitive, distracted, cluttered, ADD

culture, the best way to get noticed is to be incredible at one thing. For more than 30 years, my work has been helping nonprofit organizations tell their stories. And after three decades, I've found that the most effective and successful way to cut through the clutter of competition from other organizations, products, and messages, is to simply be remarkable at One Big Thing.

It's the same for you. In a distracted, hypercompetitive world, you can't just be decent at a number of different tasks. Too many people are pretty good, and that doesn't get you on the radar.

People don't pay for OK; they pay for great.

It's important to keep in mind that once you're successful—once you've made it to the top—you can do anything you want. The Salvation Army, for instance, is a global organization that features programs and outreaches to the homeless, disaster relief, human trafficking, poverty, the elderly, those struggling with pornography, youth camps, and much more. It reaches into every corner of need and is making a remarkable impact around the world.

But when William Booth began his ministerial career in 1852, he focused on one thing: reaching the outcasts. Thieves, prostitutes, gamblers, and drunkards were among his first converts to Christianity. As the Salvation Army website says: "To congregations who were desperately poor, he preached hope and salvation. His aim was to lead people to Christ and link them to a church for further spiritual guidance."

Today, The Salvation Army is one of the largest social service organizations in the world—even launching —a remarkable, video driven web strategy that is taking them into the digital age. But William Booth started with one noble cause and was remarkable in his commitment.

For Don Stephens, it was building a floating hospital that

became a global organization called Mercy Ships. For Jackson Pollock, it was discovering how splatter could transform his art career.

For Steve Jobs, it was combining design elegance into a computer interface. For Truett Cathy, it was creating the perfect chicken sandwich. For Dean Koontz, it was writing thrillers.

For Jeff Bezos, it was selling books online. For Guy Kawasaki, it was empowering people. For Allison Krauss, it was bluegrass music.

Once they became successful, they could do anything they want. But to get noticed, they focused on One Big Thing.

What about you? What is the One Big Thing you were born to accomplish?

Phil Cooke, *an internationally known writer and speaker, has produced media programming in nearly 50 countries around the world.*