



SIX LESSONS FROM ALTMBA

MAY 2016

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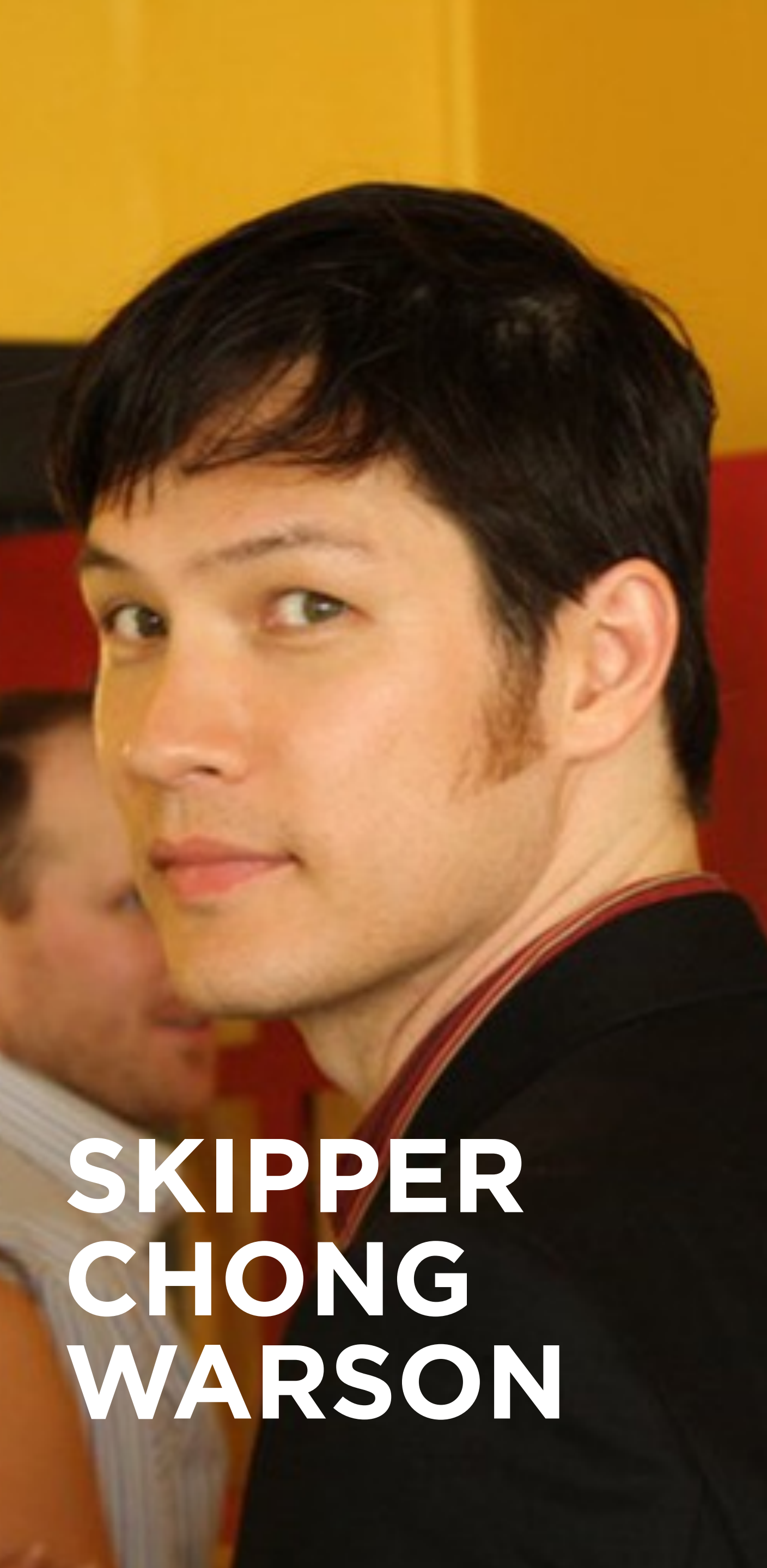
INTRODUCTIONS



**RYAN
HOSE**

MEET RYAN

Ryan loves to solve problems — big problems or small, he enjoys looking at problems from different angles, reframing them and finding ways to untangle them. Originally trained as a designer, he instinctively seeks understanding, asks lots of questions and uses his outsider's point of view to help clients see their challenges with fresh eyes. Whether he's helping global companies like Colgate Palmolive successfully launch & grow brands or working with non-profits like [TakeBackYourTime.org](https://www.TakeBackYourTime.org) to increase awareness, he's in the business of solving problems. Currently, he is working as a freelance creative director.



**SKIPPER
CHONG
WARSON**

MEET SKIPPER

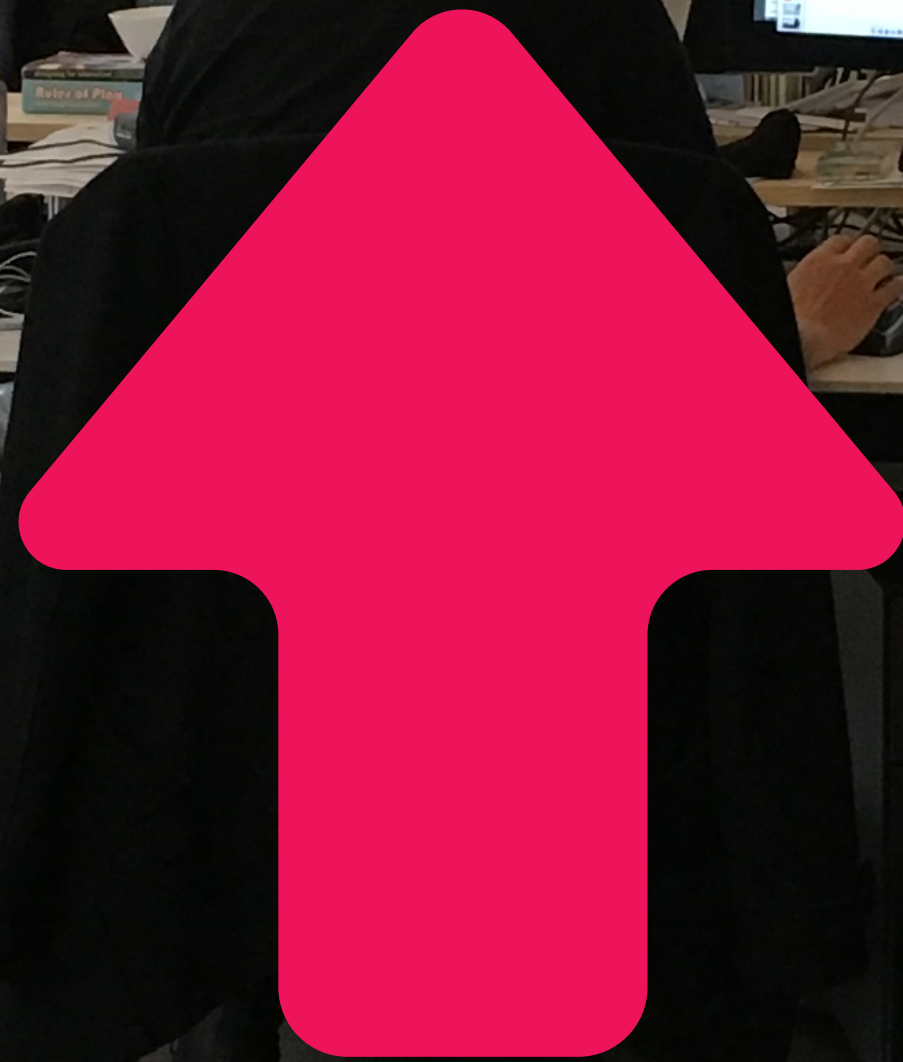
Things you probably know about Skipper:

- He's a senior visual designer here at Fjord
- If there's an option, he takes the stairs every chance he gets

Things you probably don't know:

- He was born at the foot of the Rocky Mountains and lived for the first years of his life in Seoul, Korea
- Four years ago, he married his wife Laura on the banks of the East River in front of Jane's Carousel
- Much of his off time is spent either reading to or chasing after his toddler daughter

HERE'S SKIPPER AT HIS
DESK, BETWEEN DANIEL
FALLMAN & FELIPE



MEET MY CHILD

She's just turned two-and-a-half and her two favorite questions are currently "What's that?" and "Why?"

Unfortunately, her calendar was completely booked up and she didn't respond to any emails or Slack messages about helping her dad with today's workshop.



WHAT IS altMBA?

ELEVATOR PITCH

altMBA is a month-long intensive business education centered around completing hands-on projects in small groups. The program is designed for maximum person-to-person engagement; the entire experience takes place using Zoom video conferencing, Slack and Wordpress — 100 people are accepted into three sessions a year and split into geographic segments. Started by Seth Godin, we'll be talking today about our experiences in the fourth session of altMBA, or altMBA4.



ZOOM ROOM WITH 30 FOLKS



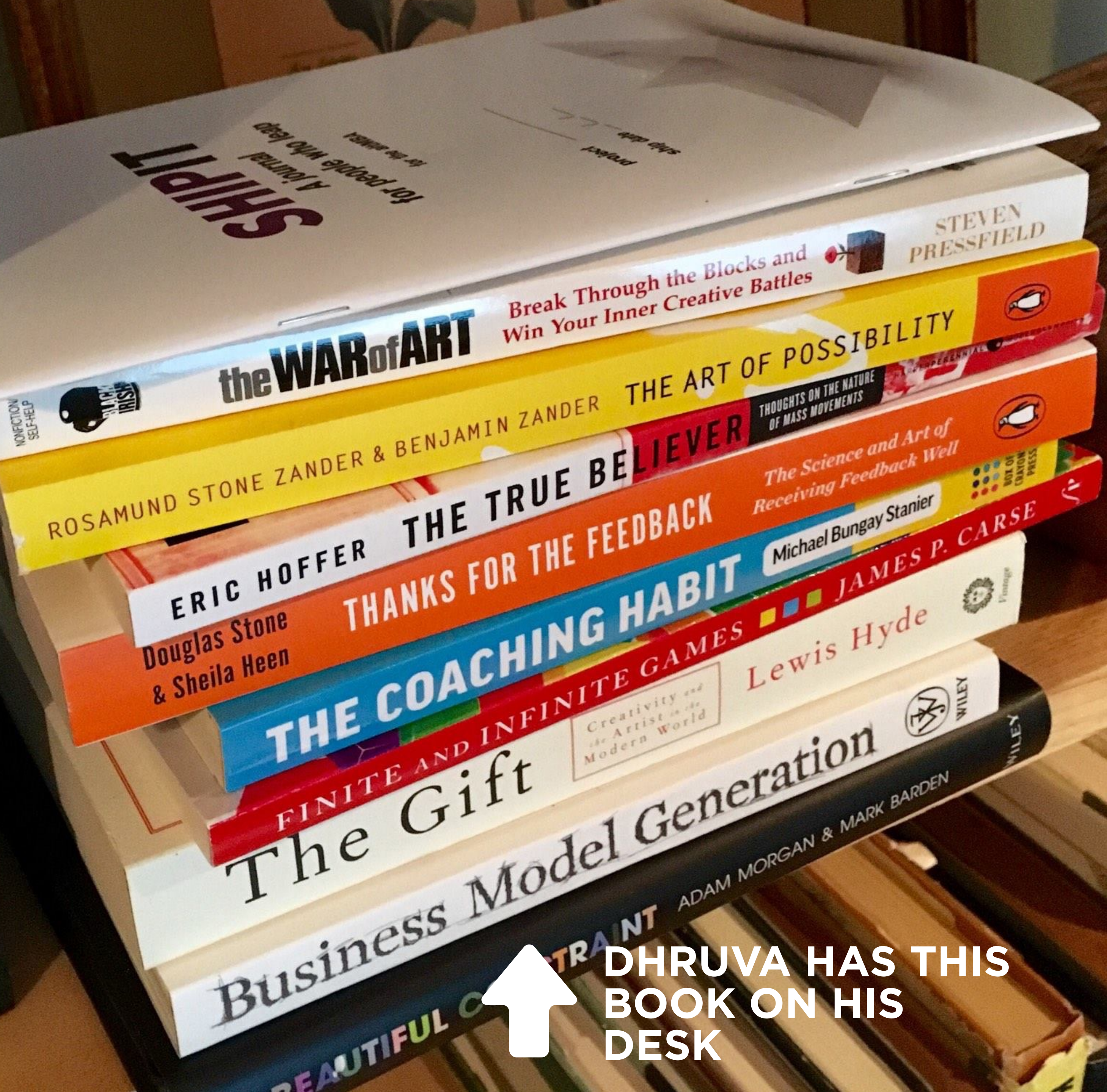
WHO'S SETH GODIN?



He's the author of 18 books that have been bestsellers around the world and have been translated into more than 35 languages. He writes about the post-industrial revolution, the way ideas spread, marketing, quitting, leadership and most of all, changing everything. You might be familiar with his books "Linchpin," "Tribes," "The Dip" and "Purple Cow."

Recently, Godin once again set the book publishing on its ear by launching a series of four books via Kickstarter. The campaign reached its goal after three hours and ended up becoming the most successful book project ever done this way.

His newest book, "What To Do When It's Your Turn," is already a bestseller.



 **DHRUVA HAS THIS BOOK ON HIS DESK**

FIRST CONTACT

After signing up, we received a box of 10 books — Austin Kleon’s “Steal Like an Artist” is not shown in this photo because Skipper’s daughter absconded with it; apropos pros.

In addition to the books, there was a flurry of emails — including signup links to Zoom, Slack and Wordpress credentials. And then for the New York area, at least two meet ‘n’ greets happened the last weekend of Feb.

WHAT DOES A altMBA PROJECT LOOK LIKE?

Inside each project prompt, there was a whole set of additional material inherent — including links to external sites and videos — see example at right.

Project 05: What is it for?

1. Start with this [article](#) about Michael Schrage's insight about changing your customers
2. Take a few minutes to think about Simon Sinek's [Why](#) challenge
3. Please watch this 2 minute summary of: [Marketing myopia](#)
4. Read this [interview](#) with George Lakoff about worldviews.
5. Check out this [course](#) on design, particularly week 1*

You can't know if anything is 'good' unless you know what it's supposed to do. A snow tire, for example, is supposed to help you drive safely in snow. If it doesn't do that, it's not doing what it's for.

But what is an expensive bottle of wine for? Does it matter if it can't be differentiated from a cheaper bottle in a blind test?

Too often, we generalize about what we're doing instead of being quite specific about the change we seek to make, in the audience we seek to make it in.

Also challenging: We fall in love with what we think we do, instead of what the market wants us to do. Book publishers aren't in the paper business, any more than Penn Central was in the train business.

SIX LESSONS



LESSON 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY

The importance of having a diverse group, of strong minds to talk things through with. To push, pull, challenge and augment ideas. As well as the importance of understanding problems from other points of view.

With a rotating cast of group members, an active Slack channel, random comments on your project, a contrasting opinion was never far away.

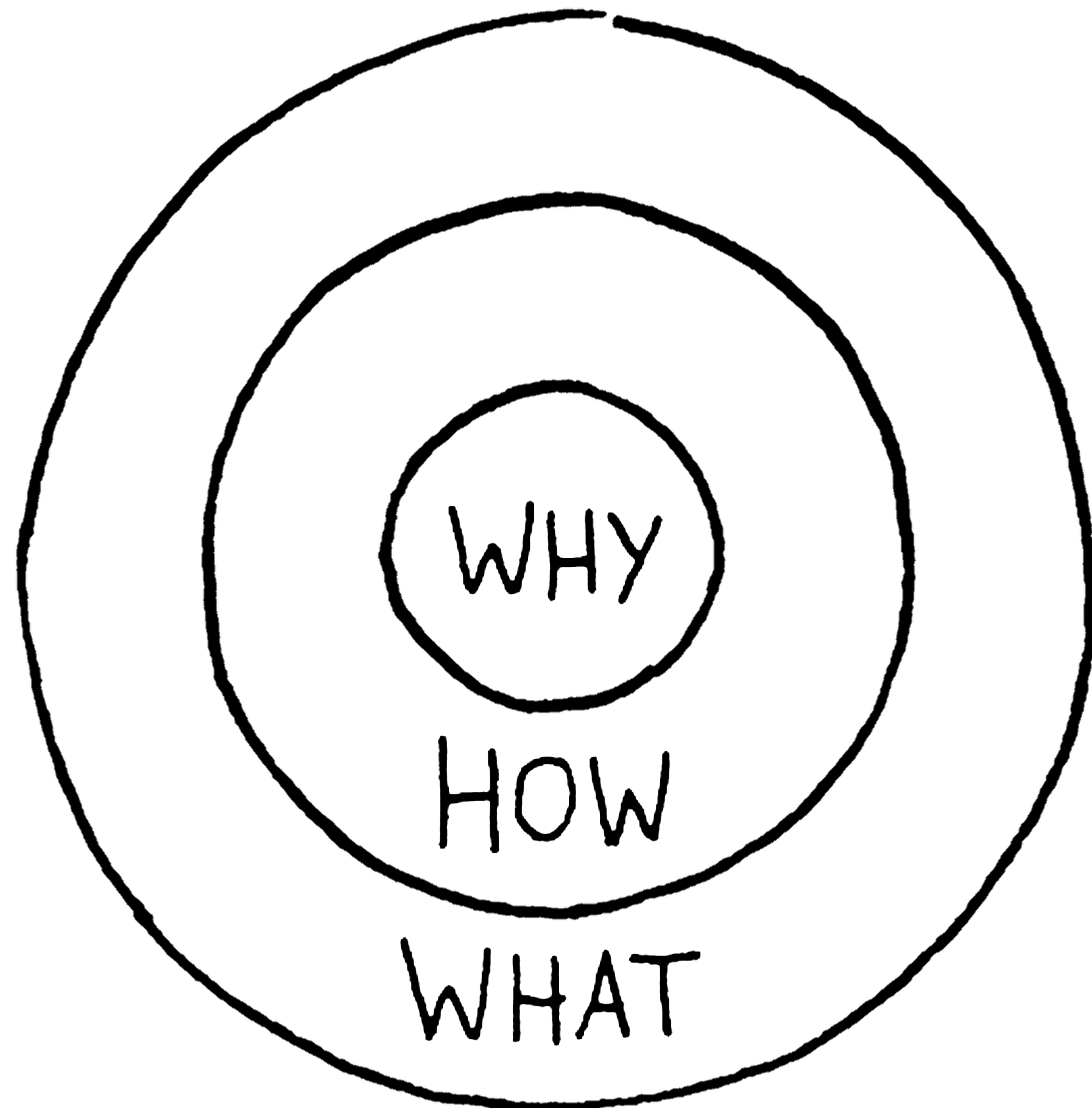
LESSON 2: RESISTANCE* AND SHIPPING

One of the strongest things that's holding you back is resistance — the little voice in the back of your head, the “but” or the “what if” that speaks up at the crucial moment and defeats the joy and insight you brought to the project in the first place.

The answer is to push through, use brute force to defeat it. Ship often, ship lousy stuff if you have to, but ship; and ship constantly.

* The idea of resistance and subsequently the lizard brain comes from Steven Pressfield's “War of Art.”





CLARITY OF **WHY**
DISCIPLINE OF **HOW**
CONSISTENCY OF **WHAT**

LESSON 3: START WITH WHY

One concept that has stuck with Skipper more than the others — and it wasn't even part of the required set of reading — is from Simon Sinek's book, "Start with Why." (There's a reason why his talk on a related subject has become the second most watched TEDtalk.)

An alternate approach is applying the interrogative technique of the 5 Whys — asking why 5 times to get to root cause of a problem. A bit like my daughter does.

**SIMON SINEK, TEDXPUGET SOUND
START WITH WHY, 2009**



http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action

LESSON 4: AT THE CROSSROADS OF SHOULD AND MUST

Elle Luna, a designer for the first iterations of Mailbox and Uber, wrote a Medium essay turned book called “At the Crossroads of Should and Must,” examining the path of should, the path of must and how we make that decision in our lives over and over.

Beautifully illustrated and thought through, the book asks some of life’s hardest questions.

SO NOW WHAT?
JUST GET UP AND
WORK EVERY DAY?

YES.

ALONE?

MOST LIKELY.

FOR WHAT?

UNCLEAR.

FOR WHOM?

YOURSELF.

FOR HOW LONG?

NO ONE KNOWS.

WHY?

BECAUSE YOU’VE GOT TO.

BUT WHAT IF
I FAIL?

YOU WILL.

AND THEN WHAT?

YOU GET TO DECIDE IF YOU KEEP DOING THIS.

IS THIS A
BAD IDEA?

THERE’S NO SUCH THING.

BUT WHAT IF IT’S HORRIBLE?

STOP DOUBTING. START DOING.

WILL WE HAVE THIS
CONVERSATION AGAIN TOMORROW?

IF YOU WISH.

WHERE DOES IT ALL LEAD?

GRAB THE NEAREST TOOL. WORK.
AND IN TIME, YOU WILL KNOW.



LESSON 5: BAD FEEDBACK IS GOOD NEWS

The value of floating ideas out to that strong support group for input. Sometimes helpful, sometimes punishing but it can give good ideas a push making them stronger, faster. It can kill off lame ideas faster too.

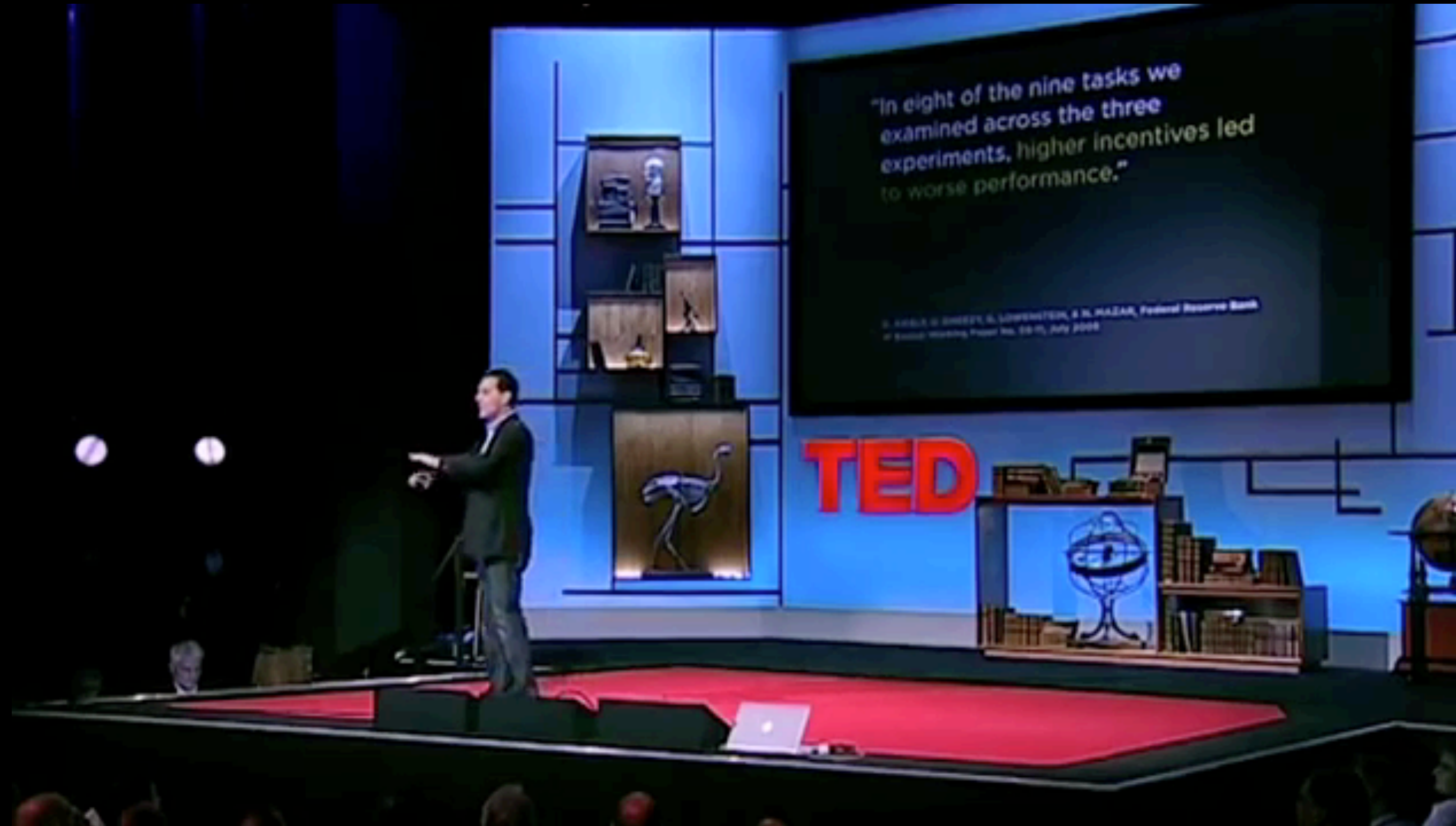
Also, the importance of answering, “What is it for?,” “Who is it for?” and “Why would they care?” over and over again.

LESSON 6: DO SOMETHING THAT MATTERS

Daniel Pink — author of several bestselling books about business, work, and behavior — examines how incentives are not helpful in spurring creativity and problem solving.



DANIEL PINK, TED TALK THE PUZZLE OF MOTIVATION 2009



http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pink_on_motivation

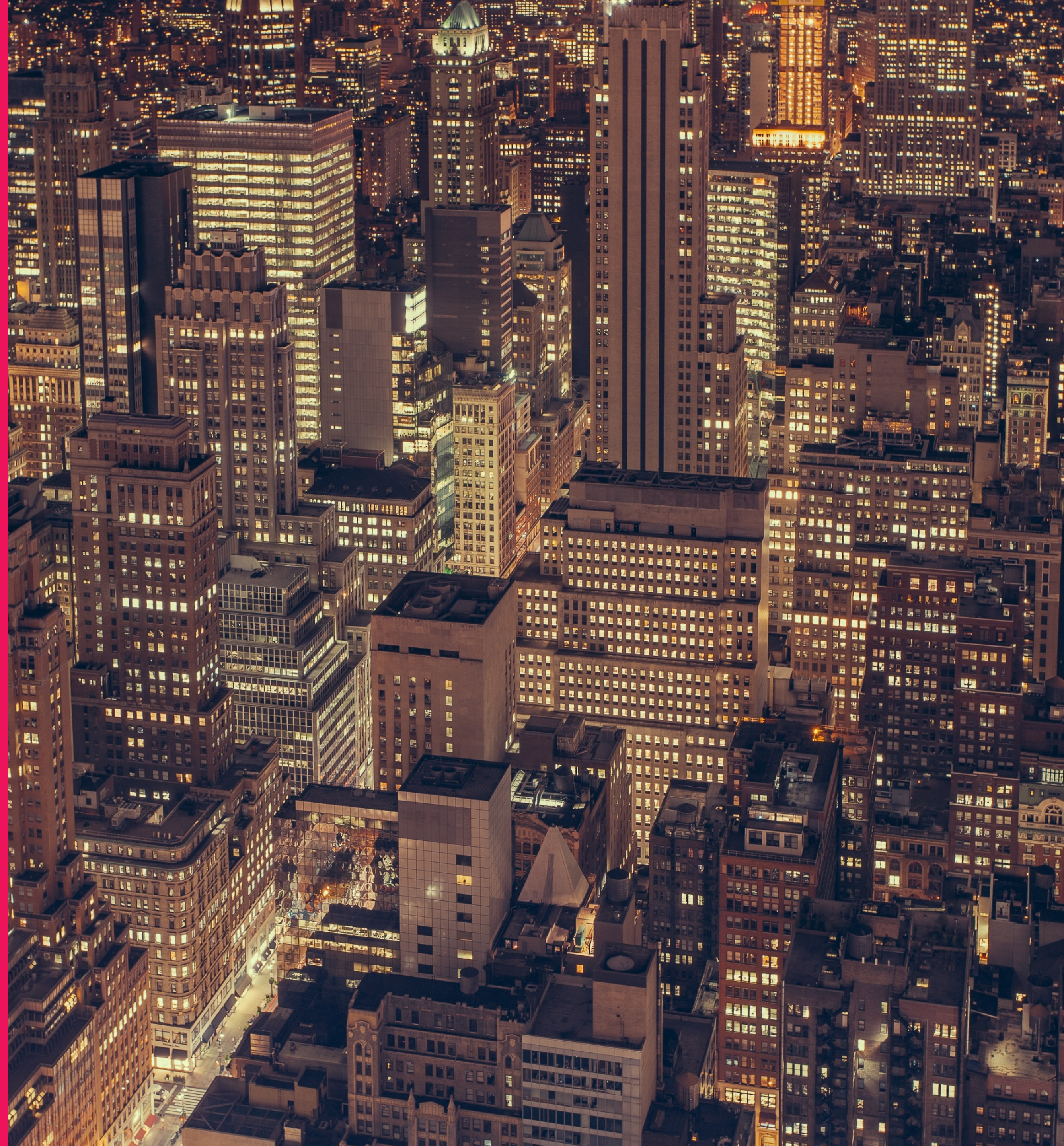
SUMMARY

MBA, BY THE NUMBERS

The traditional top-tier MBA takes:

- two years
- you usually need to move
- it costs north of \$100,000

The best business school experience is transformative, exposing students to a new way of thinking as well as a cohort of fellow travelers, motivated, smart people in a hurry to change things.





altMBA

altMBA believes that access to information is no longer the reason to go to business school because that information is everywhere. Their aim is to assemble leaders (corporate executives, non-profit linchpins, founders, managers and people in a hurry) and to connect them and amplify their work with a month of intense effort.

The altMBA program is organized around action, around publishing, around sharing work and learning from it, with a focus on:

- Changing the culture
- Changing the people you work with
- Changing yourself

OTHER RESOURCES

In addition, there was a curated list of 75 ideas and concepts made available to registered students of each session. Some of which were contained in each project, most of which are icebergs in and of themselves.

Skipper will send out this list to the studio as well as the physical books for the session as a followup to this design clinic.

A note on priority: Executives don't know everything. They can't. If you have a burning need to know what the required reading is, you might be asking the wrong question. Given that it's impossible to know everything, the challenges are: what do you need to know next, and where will you choose to go deeper?

This list helps you do both.

1. **The product adoption lifecycle:** New ideas move through a population in predictable ways. [[Rogers, *Crossing the Chasm*](#)]
2. **The job is to make change:** Great organizations change their people, and thus the culture. [[Who Do You Want Your Customers to Become](#)]
3. **Learn how to talk about your project:** Projects are at the heart of our new economy. [[What is it for?](#)]
4. **How to make decisions:** Change presents opportunities. Smart decisions defeat dumb ones. [[Smart Choices](#) book, [Dan Ariely at TED](#)]. Dumb does not mean irrational. [[Kahneman](#) and Tversky]
5. **The resistance:** Knowing what to do is completely different from doing it. Our internal narrative, the lizard brain and fear sabotage our work. [Pressfield's [blog](#), Seth Godin [Quieting the Lizard Brain video](#), [Liz Gilbert at TED](#)]
6. **All communications are marketing communications:** And design and fear and work are at the [heart](#) of it.
7. **Positioning:** Humans don't have the ability to know everything about anything. And so we create shorthands, and mostly, we compare this to that. [[Trout and Reis summary](#)]
8. **All of us are smarter than any of us:** The crowd, appropriately structured, is capable of creating great work. [[Clay Shirky, Cathedral and the Bazaar](#)]
9. **Sideways structures change the culture:** [[Fast Company](#) on Visa. The challenge of Wikipedia, daily ([case](#))]
10. **Why?** The recursive process of working all the way back to the beginning gives us clarity about what to do next. [Simon Sinek [TED talk](#)]
11. **The long tail:** If you give people a choice, people will take a choice. And the internet gives people a choice, even if it doesn't always lead to satisfaction. [[Chris Anderson](#), vs. [Barry Schwartz](#)]

QUESTIONS?

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU!

